Afterlives of the Garden

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Volume 8

Afterlives of the Garden

Receptions of Epicurean Thought in the Early Empire and Late Antiquity

Edited by
Gregson Davis and Sergio Yona

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Aristotle) and the Herculaneum papyri. His publications include an Italian translation and commentary of Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus* (2010), a volume about the Epicurean doctrine of minimal parts (2013) and an introduction to Epicurus' philosophy (2013). More recently, he published (with F. G. Masi and S. Maso) the special section of *Elenchos* (2018) on the Materialistic Pathe, (with M. Catapano) the special issue of *Lexicon Philosophicum* (2018) on Hellenistic Theories of Knowledge, a running commentary of Epicurus' *Letter to Pythocles* (2022) and a volume on the Hellenistic Peripatos (*Peripatetic Philosophy in Context: Knowledge, Time, and Soul from Theophrastus to Cratippus*).

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Abbreviations

A.P.	*Anthologia Palatina*
Arr.	Arrighetti 1973
Bl.	Blänsdorf 2011
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
DK	Diels/Kranz 1956
DRN	*De rerum natura*
E.K.	Edelstein/Kidd 1972
Hdt.	Epicurus, *Epistula ad Herodotum*
KD	Epicurus, Κύριαι Δόξαι [*Ratae Sententiae*]
L&S	Long/Sedley 1987
Men.	Epicurus, *Epustula ad Menoeceum*
OLD	Oxford Latin Dictionary
PCG	*Poetae Comici Graeci*
Pyth.	Epicurus, *Epistula ad Pythoclem*
RE	Pauly-Wissowa *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
SV	Epicurus, *Sententiae Vaticanae*
SVF	Arnim, H. von, Ed. (1903–1924). *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 Vols. Leipzig
TrGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*
Us.	Usener 1887

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Gregson Davis

Introduction: Afterlives of the Garden, Modalities of Reception of Epicurean Thought in Proto-Imperial and Imperial Rome

This collection of essays, devoted to the theme of *modalities of reception*[1] of Epicurean thought in proto-Imperial and Imperial Rome, offers a distinctive approach to the study of the reception of Epicureanism on the part of a select group of authors of the late Republic and Empire. Since literary-historical scholarship that may be categorized under the broad umbrella of "reception studies" has now grown into a flourishing branch of Classical philology, it is imperative that we clarify the critical perspectives and thematic scope of the present collection.

A primary critical aim of these commissioned papers is to illustrate both the variety and rhetorical subtlety of reception modalities discernible in a limited set of compositions by minor as well as major authors within a large historical trajectory, extending roughly from the Augustan ("proto-Imperial") period to the fourth-century CE. Individual chapters disclose nuanced patterns of thought in select literary texts that illustrate the complexity, subtlety and extent of Epicurean influence in the intellectual afterlives of the Garden.

The main criteria governing our selection of texts are not motivated by a desire to provide a survey of writing significantly influenced by Epicurean belief systems. Extensive coverage on this comprehensive scope has been ably undertaken in several recent volumes, among them: *The Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicureanism* (Mitsis 2020) and *Epicurus in Rome: Philosophical Perspectives in the Ciceronian Age* (Yona/Davis 2022). Important earlier publications along these lines include the landmark scholarly compendium, *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und der Kaiserzeit* (Erler/Bees 2000) and *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (Warren 2009). The diachronic range and scope of the latter volume are self-described in the following terms: "Chapters span the school's history from the Hellenistic Garden to the Roman Empire and its later reception in the early modern period [. . .]." While the present project is intended in part to supplement these invaluable overviews of the fecund reception of the Garden, its

1 For a sophisticated account of the varied conceptions of the term "reception" in modern scholarship, see Fernandelli 2021.

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primary focus is on the explication of literary texts in which resonances of Epicurean doctrine are shown to be central to their subtexts.[2]

Although the preponderance of the writers in our representative sample consists of poets, we have deliberately included a major prose author on the grounds that the poetry/prose binary shades into insignificance where considerations of underlying patterns of thought and the rhetorical strategies that convey them are the chief target of analysis. We have been equally conscious of the need to blur, and effectively discount, the somewhat anachronistic boundary between "philosophy" and "literature" that the modern academy has retrojected onto the Greco-Roman intellectual landscape. The complex historical and cultural parameters of the tenuous dichotomy are incisively set forth in the methodological *avant-propos* of the volume *La philosophie des non-philosophes dans l'Empire romain du 1^er^ au 11^e^ siècle* (Aubert-Baillot *et al*. 2019). Our approach is consonant with the editors' introductory caveat in that volume against projecting on to Antiquity modern definitions of philosophy and deciding "arbitrarily or anachronistically, that a given author is or is not a philosopher":

> Ecartons d'emblée ce qui serait, selon nous, une erreur de méthode: plaquer sur L'Antiquité une définition arbitraire ou anachronique de la philosophie et décider arbitrairement ou anachroniquement, que tel auteur est ou n'est pas un philosophe.[3]

In full recognition of the fact that ancient poets were generally regarded as taking part in disseminating σοφία to their readers in a broad range of discursive subtexts, we hope to explore the implicit and well as explicit "didactic" dimension of select literary texts composed in different genres and historical periods. In so doing we are adding our modest measure of tribute to the "Philosophizing Muse" in its Roman *sedes* – to appropriate the title of a recent volume of essays that reflect analytic approaches similar in some respects to our own.[4]

Within our restricted compass are innovative re-interpretations of "minor" but by no means insignificant works, such as the pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris* and the *Aetna* (for the proto-Imperial era). The chapters on these anonymous authors'

2 It does not fall within our purview to intervene in ongoing historically oriented debates about the competing influences of other major philosophical schools, such as Stoicism or Neo-Platonism, but rather to bring to attention the character and extent of the multivalent engagements with Epicurean thought in particular.

3 The writers encompassed in this set inquiries include, on the one hand, the poet Ovid and the prose author Apuleius. A similar caveat questioning the sharp polarization of philosophical and poetic discourses in the practice of Greco-Roman thinkers (in contra-distinction to the disciplinary compartmentalization enshrined in the modern academy) is put forward by Nussbaum 2003, 211–212.

4 Garani/Konstan 2014.

works are meant in part to demonstrate the *pervasiveness* of Epicurean ethical perspectives across literary genres. This pervasiveness took place via mutually reinforcing channels: in a centrifugal direction of flow, "higher education" in Republican Rome typically involved study abroad in Greece (especially, though not exclusively in Athens) at the regnant philosophical successor schools (the examples of Cicero and Horace are salient in this regard); in the reverse geographical direction, emigré Greek philosophers, such as Philodemus of Gadara and Siro in the Epicurean case, found a productive pedagogical niche in the households of aristocratic Romans. The intellectual *Bildung* of Vergil and other prominent, as well as lesser known, contemporary poets in the circle of Maecenas, for instance, was significantly nurtured by direct contact with Greek philosophers, of whom one, at least, in all probability was hosted by Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus in his villa at Herculaneum.[5]

One of the most fertile developments in Latin literary studies in recent decades has been the mining of the treasure trove of the extant papyrus corpus of Philodemus' writings on Epicurean philosophy that have been made more accessible to non-specialist readers in a rapidly growing number of expert editions (with accompanying translations) by international scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.[6] Scholars of Greco-Roman literature can now substantially enrich their interpretations of certain earlier and later imperial works by paying increased attention to the philosophizing dimension of masterworks by eminent authors. In the case of the two most iconic authors of the era of the Principate, Vergil and Horace, we have endeavored to avoid duplication of already published scholarly contributions on Epicurean thought patterns in their early works and to extend our purview to some under-studied philosophical aspects of these authors' mature canonic works, such as the *Aeneid* and the *Carmina*.[7]

We have not taken the preliminary step of articulating a general typology, however circumscribed, of the reception modalities discussed in this volume; rather, we have chosen the more pragmatic route of allowing our contributors to

5 Though the identity of the owner of the famous Herculaneum villa is not determined beyond the shadow of a doubt, Piso is far and away the leading candidate. A large proportion of the charred papyri from the villa's library was found to contain works by Philodemus, a leading contemporary exponent of Epicurean thought whose character is pilloried by Cicero in his *In Pisonem* and whom Horace mentions with approval in his *Sermones.*

6 Some items in the extant Philodemean corpus that are especially relevant to the study of late Republican poetics may be consulted in editions by Janko 2000, Armstrong *et al.* 2004, Konstan *et al.* 2007 and Tsouna 2013.

7 With respect to early works by Vergil and Horace that exhibit significant philosophical debt to Epicurean thought, as mediated principally by Lucretius, see Davis 2012 and Yona 2018. On Vergil's dialogue with Lucretius in the *Georgic*a, see Gale 2000.

elaborate their own individual approaches to nuanced analysis of texts through the Epicurean prism. Suffice it to note that modes of reception run the gamut of wholesale rejection, at one extreme, to total acceptance, at the other. The majority of the papers in this collection, however, focuses attention on the middle areas of the spectrum, in so far as they manifest *partial assimilation* of foundational tenets of Epicurean philosophy. As Michael Erler, among other scholars of Epicureanism in Rome has remarked, even followers of the arch-rival Stoic systems of thought, such as Seneca the Younger, occasionally appropriate fundamental teachings of the school, particularly in the sphere of practical ethics. Despite his well-known Stoic affiliations, Seneca does not succumb to an inflexible orthodoxy in articulating his own ethical opinions.[8]

We have included within our limited purview a few major thinkers of the later Imperial era. Among the latter is the preeminent Christian theologian, Augustine, who famously engaged in eloquent polemics directed at certain fundamental ethical teachings of the Garden and therefore occupies a space closer to the negative end of the spectrum of reception attitudes towards them. Paradoxically, however, polemical stances directed against stock Epicurean conceptions of the divine on the part of Christian theologians, in particular, constitute robust testimony to the school's seminal relevance to the enduring and profound ethical discourse on the topic of human flourishing.

Our essayists have for the most part avoided attaching badges of philosophical affiliation that pose conventional questions such as "Was X an Epicurean?" in their investigation of individual authors' stances. Careful scrutiny of the intellectual afterlives of the Garden reveals a predominantly grey area in which non-dogmatic appropriation rather than unambiguous adherence or outright rejection seems to have been the discursive norm, as is neatly encapsulated in Horace's famous declaration in *Epist*. 1.1.14: *nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri* ("I have not sworn allegiance to any [philosophical] master"). In deference to this complexity of attitudes towards knowledge rooted in the Garden, these inquiries seek to uncover and elucidate what may perhaps be best described figuratively as "conversations" – both latent and overt – on the merits of important Epicurean ethical perspectives in a representative choice of literary works.

Before outlining the lineaments of the exegeses elaborated in each contribution, it will be useful to provide an overview of their thematic interconnections that are trans-generic in range. Three major overlapping themes that are of spe-

8 See the essay by Erler entitled "Epicureanism in the Roman Empire" (Erler 2009, 49). He makes an analogous observation in the case of Plutarch apropos of his often-mordant strictures against Epicurean ethics (50–51).

cial relevance to Epicurean systems of thought define these exegeses: (A) the role of ἔρως/*amor* in a eudaimonist calculus; (B) Epicurean models of epistemology as manifested in epic narrative; (C) the role of divine beings ("theology") in the cosmos. In all three of these categories the individual interpretations put forward in this collection rely on extrapolating ethical frameworks, explicit as well as implicit, that derive from established Epicurean conceptions.

Three of the essays in this collection explore the Epicurean critique of erotic passion in different generic contexts: elegy, epyllion and lyric.

Erin M. Hanses' exposition, "A Woman's Pleasure: Sulpicia and the Epicurean Discourse on Love", develops original insights into the representation of the female voice in the fictional world of Latin amatory elegy, in which a male authorial perspective on love-relations is largely, though not exclusively, predominant. The cluster of six brief elegies transmitted in the *Corpus Tibullianum* that feature the authorial persona of Sulpicia constitutes, as is well known, the only surviving instance of poetry ostensibly composed by a woman in the entire Latin literary tradition. As such it provides a rare opportunity for the investigator to compare its unusual characterization of the erotic relationship between the speaker, Sulpicia, and her male beloved, Cerinthus, with the highly stereotyped, conventional portrayal of the emotional torments of the male elegiac *amator* in the poetry of its core exponents, such as Propertius and Ovid. Hanses' sophisticated analysis takes its point of departure in the Lucretian depiction of the shared pleasure (*mutua voluptas*) experienced in human sexual intercourse. On the basis of a scrupulous examination of Lucretius' diction, she discloses the ways in which Sulpicia intervenes in the complex Epicurean discourse on the nature of *amor*. She argues that, whereas the typical male *amator* of elegy frequently expresses disappointment and frustration with his *puella* over lack of fulfillment of his desire, Sulpicia's female persona advocates the mutuality of pleasure attainable between male and female lovers – a mutuality implied in such Lucretian phrases as *communia gaudia* and *mutua voluptas*. In her portrayal of an episode displaying female agency in sexual relations, Sulpicia participates in the Epicurean ethical conversation by articulating a different perspective on the cares endemic to ἔρως.

Hanses' argument concerning Sulpicia's uniquely crafted intervention in the dialogue concerning human sexuality is shown to be related not only to a canonic Lucretian locus on the subject of *amor*, but also to certain epigrams in Philodemus' elegiac corpus. Her demonstration is especially pertinent to the overall aim of our project and may be compared with the Horatian critique of the conventional elegiac *amator* in the *Carmina* as analyzed in Chapter 2 of this collection: "*Amator miser*: Epicurean Aspects of the Portrayal of Infelicitous *amor* in Horatian Lyric." In this connection, the historical circumstance that the major amatory elegist, Albius Tibullus, in whose literary circle Sulpicia was an active participant,

was the addressee of a Horatian verse epistle that humorously refers to the former's habitual cogitations on Epicurean philosophy is especially pertinent.

A comparably deep engagement with the Garden's ethical discourse featuring erotic desire is the subject of Nicholas Winters' contribution, "The Epicurean Project of the *Ciris*." In his acute discussion of this controversial "epyllion" from the *Appendix Vergiliana*, Winters takes a cue from the Epicurean doctrinal premises of the work as these are transparently foregrounded in a philosophizing proem. Their exposition discloses that the reader is not required to extrapolate the underlying moral values of the *Ciris* exclusively from the ensuing pattern of events and speeches. In unpacking the proem's rhetoric, which utilizes the form of a conventional *recusatio* or "generic disavowal" Winters cites the author's unambiguous reference to a formative source of intellectual inspiration stemming from the Athenian seat of the Epicurean school (3–4): *Cecropius suavis exspirans hortulus auras | florentis viridi sophiae complectitur umbra* ("The Garden of Attica, breathing sweet breezes, enfolds me in the verdant shade of flowering wisdom"). Winters' analysis of the programmatic element in the proem shows an unclouded understanding of the "paradoxical intent" of the rhetoric of disavowal (*recusatio* in the conventional parlance), which is commonly misconceived by the majority of commentators on the poem. Far from "rejecting" Epicurean influence, the poet announces an intention to *assimilate* the value system of the Garden of Attica into the mythographic subtext of the tale to follow. This assimilation is to take place at the modest stylistic level of an amatory epyllion, as opposed to that of ambitious poetic discourse on the model of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*.

The interpretative challenge openly posed to the reader by the preface to the *Ciris* consists in identifying the subtle ways in which the anonymous author proceeds to insinuate an Epicurean inflection into the retelling of this variant of a well-known legend. The self-destructive, obsessive desire on the part of the Scylla protagonist for a reciprocated erotic relationship with the legendary monarch, Minos, vividly illustrates the negative sequelae of this variety of ἔρως as expounded in the Epicurean ethical scheme. The remolding of a myth for the purpose of crafting a negative *exemplum* of human folly in matters erotic is analogous to the strategy employed in the song program embedded in Vergil's sixth eclogue, which is preceded by a preface that contains unmistakable affiliations with an Epicurean materialist view of the nature of the cosmos.[9] The ensuing, embedded song by the

9 Following the cosmological account pronounced by Silenus, the ensuing narrative program of the embedded song may be read as a miniature model of the larger thematic erotic canvas of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

vatic Silenus figure consists of a mythographic program in which tales of infelicitous *amor* (including a variant of the Scylla tale) predominate.

The Epicurean tonalities permeating the critique of the typical male elegiac *amator* is the topic of Gregson Davis' reinterpretations of three well-known Horatian *Carmina* – those addressed respectively to Pyrrha (1.5), Albius Tibullus (1.33) and Valgius (2.9). In regard to the first poem of the trio, the essay radically revises a common interpretation by refocusing critical attention on the infatuated young lover (*puer gracilis*) rather than on the attractive *meretrix* with the golden hair who is the object of the boy's strenuous desire. The older speaker frames his gentle critique in sympathetic terms that reflect his own similar youthful aberrations in affairs of the heart. A salient element in the lyrist's doleful prediction of the unhappy outcome of the love relationship is his observation that the *puer* entertains the vain hope that his *amata* will be available to him at all times (***semper*** *vacuam,* ***semper*** *amabilem*). The inevitable complaints he will utter when this availability proves elusive are expressed via indirect discourse in the coded vocabulary of the elegiac *querela* (cf. *quotiens fidem* [. . .] *flebit*). The essay argues that the youth's expectation of endless reciprocity on the part of a courtesan runs counter to the standard Epicurean diatribe against a type of *amor miser* that is obsessively focused on a unique love-object. In his *Sermones* the Horatian persona advocates the carefree erotic pleasures stemming from casual partnerships with the kind of ἑταῖραι that later populate the *Carmina* – an ethical stance that the mature *amator* contrasts with his own painful romantic experiences that are portrayed in the earlier lyric collection, the *Epodi*.

The strictures aimed at the *amator miser* continue, the essay elaborates, in an ode addressed to a fellow-poet who is portrayed as suffering under the stress and pain (*dolor*) of an infelicitous *amor* – the prominent elegist Albius Tibullus. The terms in which the lyrist defines the state of mind of the addressee are parallel to, if not intertextually coded in, those attributed to the *puer* of the "Pyrrha" ode. The elegist is urged to relinquish his excessive attachment to a *libertina* who bears the stock appellation for a Greek courtesan, Glycera. He is chastised in the opening strophe for his excessive grief caused by her infidelity (1.33.1–4): "Albius do not grieve excessively fixated on the memory of unkind Glycera, nor keep on intoning plaintive elegies, questioning why a younger man outshines you in her sight and why faith has been damaged." It is especially pertinent to the erotic sub-theme in this volume that Tibullus, as mentioned above in our discussion of the paper by Hanses on Sulpicia's contribution to the Epicurean discourse on sexual *voluptas*, was characterized by Horace in an epistle as being steeped in the teachings of the Garden.

Another ode addressed to a fellow-poet of elegiac orientation (and encapsulated in strikingly similar ethical motifs), is adduced by Davis: *Non semper imbres*

(*Carm*. 2.9). The poet Valgius, who is there apostrophized as friend (*amice Valge*), is known to have been a member of the inner circle around Maecenas that included Vergil, Plotius and Varius and formed part of the close-knit group of "Campanian" intellectuals associated with the Herculaneum seat of Epicurean studies. Valgius is subjected in the ode to a species of "frank criticism" that was customary in the school and is the subject of an extant treatise by Philodemus.[10] Like his tongue-in-cheek reprobation of Tibullus, Horace's friendly chastisement of Valgius is directed at his uncontrolled and ceaseless (*semper*) grief over the loss of an *amatus* – in this case a loss caused by the death of a young person named Mystes. Once again, the kind of erotic infatuation deplored by the Garden is blamed for the extreme pain that is anathema to the attainment of tranquility. In a stanza referring to Valgius' elegiac poems (*flebilibus modis*) in which he couched his complaints, Horace alludes to Vergil's sympathetic, but no less critical, account of the excessive grief of the mythical poet, Orpheus, that forms the conclusion to Book 4 of the *Georgica*. In all three odes selected for exegesis in the essay, an Epicurean subtext concerned with the ethical parameters of infelicitous *amor* is shown to be operative.

Robert Hedrick III's paper, "Evidence and Anger: Epicurean Cognition in the Finale of the *Aeneid*", offers an illuminating intervention in the super-abundant scholarly literature on the controversial concluding episode of Vergil's *Aeneid* – the hero's decision to slay his rival Turnus in what one prestigious school of commentators interprets as an irrational succumbing to intense anger motivated primarily by revenge. Hedrick's challenge to this common view examines the complicated ethical grounds for Aeneas' legitimate anger and reveals the extent to which they are fully congruent with Epicurean epistemological premises.[11] His meticulously honed argument elaborates on the original insights of Galinsky and Erler, in which the final episode of the *Aeneid* is viewed through an Epicurean lens, by focusing not only on the causes and effects of the protagonist's anger, but also on their cognitive basis.[12] In this account, the culminating scene of the epic instantiates the Trojan hero's reliance on "self-evidence" (ἐνάργεια*)* when he sees the baldric stripped by Turnus from the corpse of the young Pallas.

In substantiating his innovative account, Hedrick restores consistency to Aeneas' moral conduct throughout the epic as a whole – a conduct that is antitheti-

10 See the edition of this treatise by Konstan *et al.* 1998.

11 For a brief recent discussion of the Epicurean dimension of the ring-compositional treatment of the epic discourse of anger in the *Aeneid*, see Davis 2020, 472–474.

12 The author displays thorough knowledge of the ample philological debate on the nature of Aeneas' anger. Among these is the ground-breaking article by Indelli 2004 that demonstrated parallels with Philodemus' treatment of the subject.

cal to that of Turnus, whose attitude to his own death is a salient counterexample to the Epicurean doctrine of enlightened acceptance of the inevitable. The final line of Vergil's poem incisively encapsulates the "indignation" expressed by the shade of Turnus as it flees to the underworld: *vitaque cum gemitu fugit* ***indignata*** *sub umbras* ("[Turnus'] life resentfully [***indignata***] flees with a groan down to the shades)."[13] Vergil's manifest allusion to a Lucretian passage is adduced by the author in corroboration of his demonstration of Epicurean color in the denigration of fear at the prospect of one's own demise (Lucr. 3.1045–1046): *tu vero dubitabis et* ***indignabere obire*** | *mortua cui vita est prope iam vivo atque viventi* ("Will you then hesitate and *be indignant to meet your death* even though your life is already practically dead though you still live and can see?").

Enrico Piergiacomi's chapter, "Volcanos and Roman Epicureanism: Traces of Epicurean Theory in the Poet of the *Aetna*," demonstrates how the anonymous author of that poem (which, like the *Ciris*, was transmitted to posterity in the *Appendix Vergiliana*) espouses a naturalistic, non-mythological explanation of volcanic eruptions that parallels the Lucretian account of the phenomenon based on Epicurean materialism. Central to the master's meteorological theories as adopted by Lucretius is the idea that, since the gods are postulated as leading a detached existence far removed from the affairs of men and totally devoted to the enjoyment of ἀταραξία, they do not engage in the subterranean activities described in myth and legend that cause terrifying volcanic eruptions on the island of Sicily.

In the course of his thorough-going dissection of the poem's argument, Piergiacomi documents its divergencies in certain particulars from presumptively "orthodox" Epicurean principles on several interrelated issues. These divergencies, however, he takes as corroboration of the notion that the Garden traditionally encouraged debate among its adherents. In the Imperial afterlives of the school, selective assimilation, as opposed to rigid dogmatism, is shown to characterize the modality of reception adopted in the poetic discourse of the *Aetna*.

"Theological disputation" of a polemical kind is a main feature of Francesco Verde's essay, entitled "Epicurus in the Roman Imperial Age: Four "Case-Studies." The author's erudition is distilled in an investigation strategically restricted to four authors of the early and late Imperial era whom he deems to be "particularly representative of both pagan and Christian receptions of Epicurus." In terms of our project's overall objective of illustrating the pervasive influence of Epicureanism in the vast and variegated terrain of post-Augustan intellectual life, Verde's

13 The quoted translations of Vergil's text in the essay are provided by Hedrick. It is thematically pertinent to observe that Vergil employs the identical verse in describing the demise of Camilla, who is Turnus' heroic female counterpart in the battlefield opposition to the Trojans (11.831).

contribution buttresses the view that Epicureanism had a substantial and persistent impact on philosophical discourse in the Imperial age, even though it often served as a convenient target of polemic in learned debates on fundamental ethical principles.

The authors of the four case studies, in Verde's exposition, were inclined in their philosophical/theological musings towards espousing ethical concepts derived from rival schools of thought: the Peripatetics are favored in the disputations of Aristocles of Messene, while Neo-Platonist systems of thought are put forward in refutation of specific Epicurean doctrines, not only in the works of their most eminent exponent, Plotinus, but also in the lesser known writings of Atticus (fl. 176 CE) and Dionysius of Alexandria (fl. mid-third century CE). The criticisms of specific Epicurean doctrines that they elaborate – mainly in the domains of etymology and theology – share an attribute that is concisely summed up by Verde in the conclusion of his paper, where he points out that the attention paid to Epicurean concepts does not imply endorsement; rather it provides a means of devaluing other polemical targets, such as Aristotle or the Gnostics. Common to the varying argumentative strategies is the premise that "Epicurean thought, by virtue of its fundamental doctrine of pleasure, perverts the proper use of the intellect and exhorts mankind to live amorally in a world left to blind chance that is governed neither by the gods nor by divine providence."

The fourfold modalities of reception here exemplified hinge on the refutation of some central precepts fundamental to the Epicurean ethical canon, but the very process of thoughtful rebuttal paradoxically implies – to borrow a famous formulation of Shakespeare's – an act of honoring "more in the breach than the observance" that testifies to the vitality of the Garden's world view in framing philosophical controversies during the Imperial era.

Michael Erler's chapter on "Augustine and Epicurus" makes the case for a complex variety of "negative" reception on the part of a leading Christian theologian who nonetheless acknowledged the intellectual merits of certain features of Epicureanism. The Church Father, Augustine, as is well known to readers of the *Confessiones*, openly describes his strong adolescent attraction to the hedonistic philosophy of the Garden. Erler illuminates the significant theoretical pathways by which, despite the rise of both Neo-Platonic and Christian thought in Late Antiquity, the teachings of the Garden continued to shape the contours of the debates about such paramount ontological issues as the immortality of soul. His probing analysis reveals interesting "points of convergence" of Epicurean and Christian world-views on the pursuit of happiness, despite their blatant divergence on the matter of life after death. In his view, Christians and Epicureans generally concurred in their denigration of pagan religious traditions. Lucretius, for instance, illustrates the consequences of *religio* by graphically recounting the sac-

rifice of Iphigenia or by emphasising the negative role of religion in the course of Rome's history. While the Epicureans accepted religious practices such as prayer and sacrifice, they firmly repudiated the conventional notion that they could command the attention of the divine recipients. Both Christians and Epicureans earnestly hoped to provide human creatures with an enlightened *modus vivendi*; the main distinction between their ethical visions, however, was that "the Epicureans aimed at attaining happiness in this world, while the Christians promised a blessed state in another world."

To recapitulate the fundamental objectives informing this group of investigations: we have sought to provide innovative interpretations of a representative sample of Roman literary compositions from a variety of genres that illustrate differing modalities of reception attesting to a pervasive, profound and long-lasting "conversation" among lesser known, as well as prominent, thinkers regarding paramount doctrines transmitted by the Epicurean philosophical school.[14] This ensemble of investigations is methodologically "synchronic" in its orientation, in so far as it systematically examines varieties of critical engagement with Epicurean thought on the part of both minor and major Roman authors in the afterlives of the Garden.

14 The parallel notion of Epicurean "resonances" has been astutely treated by the eminent Shakespeare scholar, Stephen Greenblatt, who painted a vivid picture of the enthusiastic reception of the Lucretian text by a highly influential circle of Italian Humanist scholars. See especially his concluding chapter, "Afterlives," to his account of the rediscovery and recirculation of a rare ms. of the *DRN* in Greenblatt 2011, 242–263.

Gregson Davis

Chapter 1
Amator miser: Epicurean Aspects of the Portrayal of Infelicitous *Amor* in Horatian Lyric

The thought patterns that undergird Horatian lyric argument are often affiliated with those espoused in Epicurean philosophy. The poet of the *Carmina* frequently engages in indirect dialogue with the founder of the Garden on matters deemed essential to enjoying a life free from debilitating anxieties. This essay, which explores Horatian lyric values in relation to Epicurean tenets regarding infelicitous amatory relationships, focuses on the figure of the male *amator* in *Carm*. 1.5 (*Quis multa gracilis*), 1.33 (*Albi ne doleas*) and 2.9 (*Non semper imbres*).[1]

The vividly etched portrayals of the male *amator* in the *Carmina* belong to two distinct types. On the one hand, the lover/speaker featured in the vast majority of the Carpe Diem poems is represented as enjoying care-free sexual relations with an array of female partners (typically from the class of *libertinae*) in the context of a private symposium; on the other, this predominant *amator felix* is occasionally contrasted with the figure of a care-ridden *amator miser* who functions as his rhetorical foil. The philosophical grounds articulated by the lyrist for the pain and infelicity suffered by the *amator miser* are fully in tune with the tenor of Epicurean ethical prescriptions on the subject of *amor*. Before we embark on an analysis of three representative poems in the Horatian lyric corpus, an adumbrated account of the doctrinal stance of the Garden on the topic of achieving unalloyed pleasure (*pura voluptas*) in sexual relationships will provide a useful point of departure.

In the succinct enumeration of some of the core tenets in the Epicurean ethical system as transmitted to us in Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae*, we are told on the subject of erotic experience: ἐρασθήσεσθαι τὸν σοφὸν οὐ δοκεῖ αὐτοῖς· [. . .] συνουσίαν δέ φασιν ὀνῆσαι μὲν οὐδέποτε, ἀγαπητὸν δὲ εἰ μὴ καὶ ἔβλαψε ("They do not believe that the wise man will fall in love [. . .] 'Sexual intercourse,' they say, 'never helped

1 It is not within the restricted scope of this essay to provide a diachronic overview of the poet's portrayal of *amor* in the lyric corpus. For extended treatments of the topic from differing perspectives, see Ancona 1994 and, most recently and fully, Délignon 2019.

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anyone, and one must be satisfied if it has not harmed.'").[2] Cicero's translation of the embedded citation is cast in a less pejorative tone, in so far as he renders the Greek ἀγαπητόν by the Latin adjective, *optabile* ("desirable"): *Genus hoc voluptatum optabile esse, si non obsit, prodesse numquam* ("This type of pleasure is never beneficial; it is desirable [however] if it does no harm").[3]

The Epicurean criterion for assessing the value of sexual pleasure was the extent to which it is conducive to the attainment of happiness in life (εὐδαιμονία). Since pleasure was posited to be the overriding goal motivating human behavior, the question of which sources of pleasure were to be chosen in preference to others was a pivotal issue in the evaluation. As a guide to a rational ethical calculus, Epicurus constructed a typology of desires based on the categories of "necessary, empty/groundless and natural." The *Epistula ad Menoeceum* contains the *locus classicus* for the schema:

> One must reckon that of desires some are natural, some groundless; and of the natural desires some are necessary and some merely natural; and of the necessary, some are necessary for *happiness*, and some for freeing the body of trouble and some for life itself.[4]

Where does sexual desire and the pleasure it affords fit into this schema? In their *précis* of Epicurean ethics, Erler and Schofield espouse the view that sex falls into the subcategory of the "merely natural" rather than the "natural and necessary."[5] Be that as it may, the fundamental issue in the case of ἔρως is to determine whether it should be regarded as playing a significant role in contributing to happiness.

A partial answer to the question may be gleaned from another orthodox taxonomy of types of pleasure that is central to the school's system of values: the broad dichotomy between "katastematic" (mental) and "kinetic" (corporeal) varieties.[6] While it is clear that the former, purely static form of pleasure is defined by the ideal of ἀταραξία (freedom from mental perturbation), it is also certain

2 DL 10.118. English translations of Epicurean texts and testimonia in this paper are from Inwood/Gerson 1994, with a few slight modifications.

3 Cicero: *Tusc.* 5.94. A nuanced discussion of differing renditions of the citation is to be found in Brennan 1996.

4 "Ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μέν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί. καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μόνον· τῶν δ' ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ (*Men.* 127). Cicero alludes to this schema of *cupiditatum genera* ("types of desires") in his exposition at *Tusc.* 5.93. Erler/Schofield 1999, 658 are of the opinion that sexual pleasure belongs to the category of the "merely natural."

5 Erler/Schofield 1999, 660.

6 For detailed accounts of the complex Epicurean discriminations among types of pleasure, see Striker 1996a, 196–208; Woolf 2004; Tsouna 2020.

that the fulfillment of basic bodily desires (for example for food and drink) leads to ἀπονία (freedom from pain). We have some testimony regarding Epicurus' guardedly positive opinion on the matter in a passage of Athenaeus in which he adduces a citation from one of Epicurus' fragmentary treatises:

> Not only Aristippus and his followers, but also Epicurus and his welcomed kinetic pleasure [. . .]. For he [Epicurus] says, "For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form."[7]

This open endorsement of lovemaking on the part of the master, however, is not made without qualification. There is indirect evidence in the didactic poem of Lucretius, the most influential champion of the Garden, that the Epicureans entertained a *binary conceptualization* of ἔρως/*amor*. In his controversial proem to the *De rerum natura,* for instance, sexual desire is initially hymned as the province of a benign cosmic *numen* whose power has an irresistible impact on both gods and men. The opening line of the hymn places Venus, goddess of sexual desire and reproduction, in salient apposition to *voluptas*: *Aeneidum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas* ("Propagator of the descendants of Aeneas, source of pleasure for men and gods"). In the context of a poem that evangelistically propounds Epicurean philosophy to a Roman audience, it is plausible to interpret *voluptas* as the Latin equivalent of ἡδονή.[8] Towards the close of the proem the poet creates a memorably glowing picture of living creatures in rapturous pursuit of sexual union, described as *blandus amor* ("alluring love"), under the stimulus of a beneficent Venus (1.20).

A very different, more complicated, picture of "Venus" (connoting sexual coitus) occurs in the famous passage towards the close of Book 4, where intense passion is portrayed as producing a far from unmixed form of *voluptas*.[9] In its

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7 Οὐ μόνος δ᾽ Ἀρίστιππος | καὶ οἱ ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τὴν κατὰ κίνησιν ἡδονὴν ἡσπάζοντο, [. . .] φησὶν γάρ [ὁ Ἐπίκουρος] οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε δύναμαι νοῆσαι τἀγαθὸν ἀφαιρῶν μὲν τὰς διὰ χυλῶν ἡδονάς, ἀφαιρῶν δὲ τὰς δι᾽ ἀφροδισίων, ἀφαιρῶν δὲ τὰς δι᾽ ἀκροαμάτων, ἀφαιρῶν δὲ καὶ τὰς διὰ μορφῆς (Ath. 12.546ef). The translation is from Inwood/Gerson 1994, 78. The Epicurean treatise is identified as *Peri Telous*.

8 This putative allegorization of Venus matches Lucretius' observation later in the poem to the effect that conventional designations of divinities, such as Ceres and Bacchus, are simply hypostasizations of natural phenomena, such as grain and wine (see Lucr. 2.655–660).

9 See Brown 1987 *passim* and Nussbaum 1994, 140–191 for detailed explications of the complications of the Lucretian portrayal of erotic passion in the poem. There is considerable scholarly dispute – too dense to take up here – concerning the "orthodoxy" of the Lucretian account, on which see Rouse/Smith 1982, note b, 357–358 (with references cited therein).

extreme incarnation, this other Venus (*haec Venus*, 4.1058) misleads human actors into a form of madness that is relentlessly caricatured and subjected to unblinkered derogation. A key component of the malign aspect of this hyper-intense version of *amor* is its power to overwhelm the *amator* by causing an obsession with a unique love object (*unius amore*, 4.1066). Lucretius' account here annexes the conventional metaphors of *amor* as a festering wound and a form of *furor* ("insanity") that induces "certain pain" (*certum dolorem*) – a state deemed anathema to the Epicurean prerequisites for human flourishing. It is important to note, however, that the zealous Epicurean disciple holds out the prospect of a less detrimental type of erotic pleasure that comes from a carefree, and presumptively "natural," sexual intercourse that avoids the pitfalls of lengthy infatuation on the part of an *amator* who manages to remain unwounded "by playing the vagabond with vulgar Venus" (*volgivagaque vagus Venere*, 1071). The conceptual dichotomy of *amor* into a benign vs. malign experience receives a more explicit formulation in the lines that follow (4.1073–1076):

> Nec Veneris fructu caret is qui vitat amorem,
> sed potius quae sunt sine poena commoda sumit;
> nam certe *pura*st sanis magis inde *voluptas*
> quam miseris.
>
> Nor does he who avoids love lack the enjoyment of sex, but rather he takes those advantages that are without penalty; for certainly *pleasure that is unmixed* comes from this source more to the healthy than to the lovesick.[10]

Horace's engagement throughout his poetic career with these Epicurean perspectives on a "healthy" (*sanus*) love life is already pronounced in his earliest collection, a work that he styles "Conversations" (*Sermones*).[11] In the second satire of Book 1, the issue of what types of sexual relations are to be chosen or avoided by the ardent lover receives prominent treatment. The terms of the satirist's calculus of sexual pleasures are framed with reference to the Epicurean criterion of reducing the risk of pain and thereby attaining a level of *voluptas* that is least vitiated by an admixture of misery. As Sergio Yona points out in his discussion of the satire:

10 The Latin text and its English rendition are here adopted (with minor alterations of the latter), from the bilingual edition of Rouse as revised by Martin Ferguson Smith: Rouse 1982. Regarding the potential, if not actualization, of a love that includes mutual pleasure, rather than extreme pain, see the essay by Hanses in this volume on the elegiac poetry of Sulpicia.

11 Yona 2018 provides the most thoroughly documented and perceptive account of Horace's dialogue with Epicurean ethics in the *Sermones*.

> He [Horace] alludes to certain epigrams of Philodemus in which the pleasurable convenience of an easy love is contrasted with the "grave cares" (*S.* 1.2.110: *curasque gravis*) of a riskier and more demanding amour.[12]

With a palpable gesture towards the Lucretian account of a love-life relatively uncorrupted by pain, the plain-speaking satiric persona declares his own unabashed preference for the type of sexual object (*Venus*) that he characterizes as "readily attainable" (2.119): *namque parabilem amo Venerem facilemque* ("For I love sexual pleasures that are readily attainable").

Horace's adoption in the *Sermones* of Epicurean desiderata for a felicitous *amor* is consistent with certain poems in his lyric poetry that contain negative portrayals of the *amator miser*.[13] The topic is eloquently explored in the famous ode addressed to a woman named Pyrrha (1.5):[14]

> Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
> perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
> grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?
> cui flavam religas comam,
> simplex munditiis? Heu quotiens fidem
> mutatosque deos flebit et aspera
> nigris aequora ventis
> emirabitur insolens,
> qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea,
> qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem
> sperat, nescius aurae
> fallacis. miseri, quibus
> intemptata nites: me tabula sacer
> votiva paries indicat uvida
> suspendisse potenti
> vestimenta maris deae.[15]

12 Yona 2018, 115. See his ample discussion therein (113–118) of the ideas in this satire regarding norms of an *amor sanus* as paralleled in works of Philodemus, both in his epigrams and in fragmentary excerpts from his philosophical treatises.

13 My use of the epithet *miser* in this context is restrictive, not universalized. It is not meant to indicate that "all lovers are wretched," but rather to designate "the type of lover who is wretched."

14 Latin excerpts from Horace's *Carmina* are cited in the edition of Klingner 1982. Accompanying English translations are my own.

15 The case for Zielinski's emendation to *deae* (the mss. transmit *deo)* is, in my judgement, totally persuasive. The emendation may not be strictly necessary, however, since the masculine form can indicate common gender. The unnamed *deus* in *Epodi* 14 who controls the emotions of the lover/poet (*deus, deus nam vetat*, 6) may be presumed to be none other than Venus.

What lean youngster doused with liquid scents
is pressing you on beds of copious roses, Pyrrha,
beneath the welcoming grotto? For whom
do you tie back your golden hair
in a knot exquisitely smart? Alas! how often
will he bemoan your lack of faith, of gods
that change their ways, a neophyte stunned to see
the seas grown rough with darkening gales!
Now he enjoys your body's gold, naively
hoping you'll always be available, always be
your lover of choice – ignorant of a breeze
that proves deceitful. Those men are lovesick
who have yet to assay your shining sea.[16]
As for me: a votive tablet on a temple wall attests
that I have hung up my soaking clothes
to the divine mistress of the sea.

The conventional title attached to this lyric gem ("To Pyrrha") is potentially misleading, since the thematic focus of the ode's argument as it unfolds in the two central strophes is on the predictable misfortune and mindset of the youthful male *amator*.[17] Close attention to the asymmetrical depiction (in both exterior and interior terms) of the two main players in the scenario will illuminate the ethical framing of the ode.

To begin with the addressee, Pyrrha: it is important to note at the outset that she is representative of the type of courtesan (*meretrix*) that is by far the most common *amata* linked to the poet of the *Carmina*. Her Greek appellation aligns her with the string of ἑταῖραι who are typically portrayed as providing musical, as well as sexual, *voluptas* to the poet in sympotic contexts.[18] In the case of Pyrrha ("fiery"), her emblematic appellation carries an additional omen of her power to arouse "flaming" passion, while her strikingly "golden hair" (*flavam comam*, 4) is re-invoked in the third stanza in the epithet *aurea* ("golden," 9) applied to her voluptuous body.

The inference that the female lover addressed in the poem is to be categorized as a professional courtesan is borne out by complex motifs that furnish the reader with a crucial discursive key. The most salient of these is the cosmetic sign of Pyrrha tying back her hair into a smart and simple knot: *Cui flavam religas*

16 My English version, *faute de mieux*, here does not do justice to the layered metaphor, for the word *nites* reflects both the shining of a sunlit sea and the glitter of gold.

17 On this point, see my previous treatment of the ode in *Polyhymnia* (Davis 1991, 224–233).

18 This persona type is exemplified by, among others, the Glycera of *Carm.* 1.19.5 and the Phyllis of *Carm.* 4.11.3.

comam | *simplex munditiis?* ("For whom do you tie back your golden hair [in a knot] exquisitely smart?") (4–5). The aphrodisiac associations implicated in the simple hairdo are neatly illustrated in *Carm.* 2.11 where Horace calls upon a *scortum* (harlot) named Lyde to join him in a private drinking-party, complete with the normal sympotic accoutrements of roses and perfumed unguents: *rosa* | *canos odorati capillos,* | *dum licet, Assyriaque nardo* | *potamus uncti*" ("let us drink our wine, while we may, our greying hair scented with roses and [our brows] anointed with Assyrian unguents"). The invitation to the female partner comes to its climax in the closing stanza in which the attractive tell-tale hairdo is described in language closely resembling that adopted in the Pyrrha ode:

> Quis devium scortum eliciet domo
> Lyden? Eburna, dic age, cum lyra
> maturet, *in comptum Lacaenae*
> *more comas religata nodum.*
>
> Who will entice from her home the crafty harlot,
> Lyde? Go bid her to come quickly, with her ivory
> lyre and *with her hair tied back*
> *after the Laconian fashion in a knot.*

The reference to "the Laconian fashion" elicits the seductive simplicity of the βότρυχος (= Latin *nodus*) – the favored hairstyle of Greek (ex)-slave courtesans in the fictional Roman demi-monde of the *Carmina*.[19] Another salient example of the "simple hairdo" motif as an element in the poet's invitation to a *meretrix* recurs in *Carm.* 3.14 (21–22): *dic et argutae properet Neaerae* | ***murreum nodo cohibere crinem*** ("Go and tell the clear-voiced Neaera to hurry up and *tie her hair scented with myrrh in a knot*").

In the context of the Pyrrha ode, it is noteworthy that the justly admired locution, *simplex munditiis* ("[in a knot] exquisitely smart," 5) encapsulates a topos already to be found in the Plautine comedy, *Poenulus*, in which a young man (*adulescens*) named Agorastocles, who is in the throes of immodest desire (*amo immodeste*, "my desire is uncontrollable"), seeks out, accompanied by a pimp, the erotic favors of a *meretrix* in the environs of a temple of Aphrodite on a feast-day

19 I do not make the claim that *munditiae* in respect to hairstyle is a motif exclusive to *meretrices* (see, for instance, Ov. *Medic.* 22.27–28, where it is recommended practice for any woman wishing to enhance her beauty); rather, that within the motif semiotics of the Horatian ode, the association between Greek-named courtesans and the *nodus* is an index of their role as readily available sexual partners.

of the goddess: *oculos volo meos delectare* ***munditiis meretriciis*** ("I want to feast my eyes on *the smart grooming of the courtesans*").[20]

This normative nexus of associations between *munditiae* and *meretrix* transparently typecasts Pyrrha as an experienced courtesan preparing to offer her services to the ardent *puer*. As we have observed, the choice of love-object (*Venus parabilis*) forms part and parcel of the ethical prescriptions of the Epicurean school. The network of oblique references to these and similar norms (including the choice of *amata*) that come to a head in the closing lines of the Lyde ode are astutely noted as significant for Horace's ethical canon in the commentary by S. J. Harrison on the poem.[21]

It is against this motif background of *meretrices* as preferred love-partners that the critique of the naive youngster at the center of the Pyrrha ode is rhetorically foregrounded. The fact that the critique is delivered in a sympathetic and avuncular tone in the third person in no way detracts from its subtle didactic purpose, which is to denigrate not the choice of *amata*, but the self-defeating expectations that the *puer* invests in this type of erotic relationship in the long term.[22] It is the vulnerability of the green *amator*, not the behavior of the professional courtesan, that is the focus of Horace's ethical dialogue with the Epicurean value-system.

The terms of the ensuing critique are foregrounded in the initial description of the external appearance of the *amator*. If the bodily adornment of Pyrrha constitutes a "sign" – in the technical sense of the term in the semiotic lexicon – the cosmetic preparation of a young boy who is "doused with liquid scents" is no less pertinent to unveiling the subtext encoded in the love-scene. Though the use of perfumed unguents combined with the couch strewn with roses (*multa* [. . .] *in rosa*)

20 Plaut. *Poen.* 192–193. The line is cited in the commentary of Nisbet/Hubbard 1970, 75 on *Carm. 5.5.* The desirable attribute of *munda* as applied to a courtesan is also mentioned by the Horatian satirist in the passage from *Sermones* 1.2 (discussed above in relation to the approved type of love-object). As Mayer suggests in his commentary *ad loc*, the hairdo has an obvious practical function in the act of copulation. The reference to the Plautus lines is not intended to be an "intertextual" allusion; rather it provides an example of the cultural semiotics of the "knot" hairdo in the context of courtesan adornment.

21 See Harrison 2017, 136, who remarks on the affinities with Epicurean values in the first three stanzas of the ode.

22 This reading goes against the grain of the conventional characterization of Pyrrha as a *femme fatale.* If she is indeed typecast as a *meretrix,* as the motif signals indicate, the charge of *femme fatale* is fundamentally misleading, if not specious.

are conventional indices of a sympotic setting,[23] there is an added layer to the cosmetic efforts of the strenuous *puer* that suggests that both his over-application of body scents (he is thoroughly "doused", *perfusus*) augmented with the profusion of roses (*multa rosa*) is comically "over the top" (to employ contemporary parlance) and is meant to stand in stark contrast to the minimalist grooming practice (*simplex munditiis*) of the courtesan. The over-zealousness on the part of the *amator* is a signifier of his lack of moderation – a topic that foreshadows the speaker's ethical critique to follow. The poet also interjects a dose of irony into the spectacle of an extravagant sympotic ambience that projects a degree of anxiety out of keeping with the Epicurean playbook of light-hearted *voluptas*.

With the pivotal exclamation, *Heu* (Alas!) occurring in the fifth line, the speaker turns away from the opening apostrophe addressed to Pyrrha in order to inspect the inner disposition of the inexperienced *amator*. Since the nub of the poem's argument consists in the prognosis of infelicity, a careful analysis of the pubescent lover's vain expectations will clarify the basis of the diagnosis on which that prognosis rests.

The designation of the *amator* as *puer* is a conspicuous thematic marker which, unlike *adulescens* or *iuvenis*, signifies extreme immaturity, and thereby sets up an ominous asymmetry between him and the seasoned *amata*. No less significant to the scenario is the anonymity of the boy, which underscores the impersonal aspect of the encounter from the vantage-point of the named courtesan and the detached narrator. From this perspective, the epithet *gracilis* that modifies *puer* is appropriately rendered as "lean" – a coded connotation that highlights the "love-sick" state characteristic of the typical *amator* of Roman erotic verse.[24] By this reading, the emaciated body of the *amator* is a symptom of a mind in need of a cure (φάρμακον).

The pathology in question is a state of "cognitive dissonance" with respect to the reality of Pyrrha's role as *meretrix* – a mindset revealed in the prognosis: "how often will he bemoan your lack of faith (*fides*) and gods that change their ways" (5–6). To complain of her violation of *fides* (loyalty) under the circumstances reflects wishful thinking and false expectations. Complaint (*querela)* of the infidelity of the love-partner is, of course, a standard defining motif of the *amator miser* of elegiac verse, but the underlying condition provoking it transcends the

23 See Mayer 2012, 86–87 on *Carm.* 1.5.1–3 for a detailed gloss of these elements. As he notes, the grotto (*antrum*) in which the scene is set is probably to be imagined as artificial – a common architectural feature of luxurious Roman villas.

24 See *OLD* (1). The non-derogatory sense of "slim" cannot, of course, be excluded, but in this context, the presumptive inclusion of the *puer* in the category of *miseri* makes the picture of an emaciated *amator* the more plausible reading.

generic cliché. The puerile lament resonates with the *querela* of the elegist because both derive from the same irrational source.

The complaint of inconstancy is interlinked with that of "changing gods," which may be construed as metonymy for "adverse change of fortune" – a linkage that has the grammatical force of a hendiadys. The reference to change of fortune is very closely in dialogue with Epicurean thought on the proper attitude to adopt in the face of chance (τύχη).[25] The unfortunate *puer* is understandably not yet enlightened enough to absorb the shock of an unfaithful lover – an insight that the lyrist prefaces with the poignant interjection, "Alas!" The appropriate "therapy of desire" (to annex the title of Martha Nusbaum's fundamental study) is reserved for the mature lover who has assimilated the wisdom of the school, as it is tersely articulated in Epicurus' *Ratae sententiae*: "Chance has a small impact on the wise man."[26]

As we shall see further below in discussion of the mature lover portrayed in the final strophe, the dichotomy between folly and wisdom is often aligned with the young /old axis (*puer/senex*; νέος/γέρων) in ancient thought. Epicurus notably preached that it was never too early to begin the study of philosophy, which alone furnishes the foundation for a happy life. The opening section of his widely diffused *Epistula ad Menoeceum* – a text that was well known to Horace and his circle of poet-friends – is very trenchant on this point:

> Let no one delay the study of philosophy while young nor weary of it when old. For no one is either too young or too old for the health of the soul. He who says either that the time for philosophy has not yet come or that it has passed is like someone who says that the time for happiness has not yet come or that it has passed.[27]

The hapless youth's lack of preparation for the fickleness of τύχη is further elaborated in the graphic imagery of verses 6–8). The trope of the unhappy *amator* as having encountered, or about to encounter, a perilous storm at sea is common, if not banal, in Roman erotic discourse.[28] To grasp its full density, however, it is necessary to go beyond the simplistic equation of a particular *amata* with the sea to embrace a wider metaphorical horizon in which turbulent waves function as

25 See e.g. SV 55.

26 Βραχέα σοφῷ τύχη παρεμπίπτει (KD 16); For the book title cited, see Nussbaum 1994.

27 Μήτε νέος τις ὢν μελλέτω φιλοσοφεῖν, μήτε γέρων ὑπάρχων κοπιάτω φιλοσοφῶν: οὔτε γὰρ ἄωρος οὐδείς ἐστιν οὔτε πάρωρος πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν ὑγιαῖνον. ὁ δὲ λέγων ἢ μήπω τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν ὑπάρχειν ἢ παρεληλυθέναι τὴν ὥραν ὅμοιός ἐστι τῷ λέγοντι πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν ἢ μήπω παρεῖναι τὴν ὥραν ἢ μηκέτι εἶναι τὴν ὥραν (*Men.* 122). Cf. the contrast between the younger herdsman-poet, Meliboeus, and the older and wiser Tityrus in Verg. *E.* 1.

28 Cf. Catullus' use of the figure of the *naufragus* (shipwrecked lover) at *Carm*. 68.1–6. The figure became a favorite in the work of the Latin amatory elegists contemporary with Horace.

trope for the experience of uncontrolled erotic desire. The Hellenistic epigrammatist Meleager, who is a paramount source of major tropes in Latin erotic verse, unfurls the figure in a compound verb ἐρωτοπλοεῖν ("to make the sea-voyage of love," *Anth. Pal.* 5.156).[29] A comparable deployment occurs in another Meleager epigram (*Anth. Pal.* 12.167) where the enamored speaker describes the "heavy gust [blown by] Desire" (βαρὺς πνεύσας Πόθος) that tosses him about on "the sea of Aphrodite" (Κύπριδος ἐν πελάγει). Although the Horatian ode does not explicitly fathom the depth of the inner emotional turmoil of the *amator* who will experience the storm-tossed waters for the first time, there is a provocative comparison to be adduced with Lucretius' use of the metaphor of "fluctuation" ("disturbed waves") to depict the uncertainty and apprehension endemic to erotic experience (Lucr. 3.1077). An important component of the emotional perturbation we are asked to imagine in the mind of the *puer* is jealousy hinted at in the figure of a "breeze that proves deceptive" (*aurae* | *fallacis*, 11–12).

What I have referred to as the ode's "Epicurean subtext" is discernible in the choice of the verb *emirabitur* (8) that the poet uses to describe the emotional reaction of the *puer* to his erotic marine journey. The compound verb, *e-mirari*, containing an "intensifying" prefix, was an apparent coinage of Horace's. It is by no means insignificant that the dictum, *nil admirari*, ("be surprised at nothing") was a cardinal precept of the school which Horace quotes as the opening salvo of *Epist.* 1.6:

> *Nil admirari* prope res est una Numici,
> solaque quae possit facere et servare beatum.
>
> *"Be astonished at nothing"* is the one and only thing, Numicius,
> that can make and keep a person happy.

In the context of the relationship between the emotionally balanced Pyrrha and the hyper-ardent *puer*, the shock repeatedly to be suffered by the latter at her lack of constancy (a repetition predicted in the adverb, *quotiens* ["how often"]) testifies to the persistence of an irrational desire that guaranties a painful and infelicitous *amor* – the very antithesis of the type advocated in the Epicurean value-system. The youth's prospects of attaining a variety of *voluptas* unspoiled by mental agitation is doomed to recede further with each iteration of Pyrrha's (predictably) promiscuous choice of mate. Compounding his emotionally turbulent state is his pathetic hope that she will remain forever available to him. This failure to impose a *limit* (πέρας in the Epicurean lexicon) on his vain expectation is a crucial element

29 I owe this Meleager reference to the commentary of Mayer 2012, 89 on 12–13.

in the poet's critique that receives incisive emphasis in the repetition of the word *semper* ("always") in the third strophe (*qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem | sperat*). Behind the vain wish for stable reciprocity from a courtesan is the cognitive error of erasing the inevitable fluctuation of Tyche – the principle of oscillation between good fortune and bad – that a mature sage prudently accepts and guards against to in order to maintain his inner tranquility.[30]

The transitional generalization that prefaces the final stanza of the ode sums up the terms of a mental predisposition that leaves amatory infelicity in its wake: *miseri | quibus intemptata nites*. This wry observation highlights the irresistible impact of Pyrrha's beauty on those who have yet to enjoy her favors. The epithet, *miser*, as is well known to students of Latin amatory verse, is iconic code-word for "love-sick."[31] This relative clause subtly redeploys the figure of the "sea of *amor*" in so far as the verb *temptare* (compounded in the participle *intemptata*) is sometimes used by Latin poets in connection with the adventure of sea-faring.[32]

The poem's closing lines shift the focus yet again, this time away from Pyrrha and her lover to a vignette enshrining the speaker's acquired wisdom. The "sea" in question (15) is figure for the "sea of Aphrodite" (Meleager's expression to which we have alluded above). Those philologists who countenance the inference that the unnamed "divinity who controls the sea" is meant to be the god, Neptune, egregiously ignore the fact that the *mare* in this thematic context is not a literal, but a figurative, "sea."[33] The "sea of love" is the province of the goddess Venus, in whose temple the ship-wrecked older and enlightened *amator* has placed his votive offering of soaking clothes commemorating his survival. A parallel narrative anecdote emblematic of the lover's survival is depicted in similar terms in *Carm.* 3.26, where the poet, as composer of amatory verse, hangs up his votive lyre (the Lesbian *barbiton*) to the pertinent divinity: *hic paries habebit | laevum marinae qui Veneris latus custodit* ("this temple wall that guards the left side of marine Venus will hold [my lyre]).[34] While the ritual parallel, no less than the argument of the poem, establishes beyond doubt that the relevant divinity in *Carm.* 1.5 is to be understood as Venus, the gesture of renunciation has a different existential scope in the two poems. Whereas the speaker of 3.26. is declaring his disavowal of

30 On the wish to "flatten out" the oscillations of fortune, cf. Vergil's indirect critique of the analogous stance of Meliboeus towards change in *Ecl.* 1, on which see Davis 2012, 17–21.

31 Its iconicity is especially salient in the programmatic opening elegy of Propertius (1.1.1) and in the parodic imitation of Ovid in *Am.* 1.1.25.

32 For parallels, see documentation in Nisbet/Hubbard 1970, 77 on 13.

33 As correctly pointed out by Nisbet/Hubbard 1978, 78 on 13*c*.

34 See Nisbet/Hubbard 1970, 79, on 16. on the minority of scholars who prefer to retain the ms. reading *deo*.

erotic verse *tout court* along with the life experiences that notionally inspired it, the mature *amator* of the Pyrrha ode is renouncing his past pursuit of a dangerous brand of *amor* that involves an anxiety-ridden obsession with a unique *amata*.

The foregoing analysis of the poem's argument points to an engagement with the philosophical issue of how to guarantee and sustain a care-free amatory liaison. That argument contains an ostensible paradox in regard to the ill-omened forecast imagined by the poet in the case of the *puer,* for while the latter's choice of sexual partner – a professional courtesan – is congruent with Epicurean prescriptions, its potential value is undermined by the attitude brought to the affair by the unenlightened youth, who succumbs to the hazards of an unbridled passion of the sort that is incompatible with the goal of an unmixed *voluptas*. The lyrist of the Pyrrha ode, no less than the satirist of *Sermones* 1.2, implicitly assumes the role of teacher in the school of love (*praeceptor amoris*) by composing a future scenario that shows what type of *amor* is to be avoided. In sharing with the reader in the closing strophe his own errors made in past erotic entanglements, the older and wiser speaker points the way without condescension to a safer route to εὐδαιμονία that is founded on a sophisticated hedonic calculus advocated by the school.[35]

Horace's unequivocal strictures against a lover's fixation on an *amor* that encompasses the miseries of broken faith and jealously are clearly in evidence in *Carm*. 1.33, which is addressed to his friend, the poet Albius Tibullus.[36] The opening lines deliver a frank message:

Albi, *ne doleas plus nimio* memor
immitis Glycerae, neu *miserabilis*
decantes *elegos*, cur tibi iunior
laesa praeniteat fide.

Albius, *do not grieve excessively*, stuck on the memory
of unkind Glycera, nor keep on intoning *plaintive*
elegies, questioning why a younger man outshines you
in her sight, and why faith has been damaged.

35 The lyric poet's didactic strategy of adducing examples of his own misguided conduct in previous love affairs – seen as counter-productive to a happy life – is most transparent in the *Epodi* (see especially 11 and 14).

36 The identification of Albius with the poet, Tibullus, is accepted by the majority of editors. For a dissenting opinion, see especially Mayer's commentary (with references cited therein). My line of argument does not depend on the secure identification of this particular elegiac poet/*amator* with Tibullus.

Practitioners of Latin amatory elegy in the late Republic (among whom Tibullus was regarded as in the top rank), painted a stereotyped image of the composer/*amator* as a dejected (*miser*) victim of an unfaithful *puella*, and the predominant tone sounded by all the elegists was one of bitter complaint (*querela*). The emotional pain (*dolor*) suffered by the typical elegiac *amator* is antithetical to the Epicurean vision of untroubled *voluptas*, which is formally defined in their system as the absence of pain. That Horace's blunt admonition to Tibullus is attuned to the doctrine is made highly plausible by the fact that the lyrist devotes one of his philosophically imbued epistles to none other than this elegist friend.[37] The "conversation" between the poets in the informal epistolary style sheds light on the intellectual dimension of their literary praxis and their shared interest in the preconditions of εὐδαιμονία (*Epist.* 1.4.1–5):

> Albi, nostrorum sermonum candide iudex,
> quid nunc te dicam facere in regione Pedana?
> scribere quod Cassi Parmensis opuscula uincat,
> an tacitum siluas inter reptare salubris,
> *curantem quicquid dignum sapiente bonoque est?*
>
> Albius, frank critic of my "Conversations," what am I to say you are now doing in the Pedum countryside? Are you composing small-scale works (*opuscula*) that challenge those of Cassius of Parma,[38] or taking quiet, healthy strolls in the woods while *cogitating quietly on what is worthy of the wise and virtuous man?*

The second of the alternative rhetorical questions Horace poses to his younger contemporary, Tibullus, suggests that the latter was given to leisurely philosophical cogitation on a subject that was hotly debated in Epicurean circles: the compatibility between the goals of pleasure and moral virtue. In the robust defense of the Garden that Cicero ascribes to the *persona*, Torquatus, in his most thorough critique of the Hellenistic schools in the dialogue *De finibus*, the ardent disciple reiterates the founder's unequivocal affirmation to the effect that, far from being incompatible, the two are interdependent.[39] To quote from the *Epistula ad Menoeceum*: "it is impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably, and justly, and impossible to live prudently, honorably and justly without living pleasantly. For the virtues are natural adjuncts of the pleasant life and the pleasant

37 As in the case of *Carm*. 1.33, the identity of the Albius addressed in the epistle as the poet, Tibullus has been challenged (in my view, on specious grounds) by some eminent philologists, such as Postgate and Baehrens.

38 This obscure author is reputed to have been a composer of love-elegies, on which see Wilkins 1955, on line 3.

39 *Fin.* 1.42–54. See also the remark on the topic in Annas/Woolf 2001, 20 n. 19.

life is inseparable from them."[40] In the conjunction of the two in the phrase, *sapiente bonoque* (5) the sage is *ipso facto* an epitome of virtue. By tantalizingly juxtaposing the two passions of the addressee in the opening lines of the epistle – the composition of amatory elegies, on the one hand, and the study of philosophy, on the other, Horace may be postulating the relevance of the former activity to the latter. Tibullus, we are entitled to presume, is being politely encouraged to apply the lessons derived from his intellectual musings on his stroll in the woods near his country villa to ponder the ethical dilemma posed by the fictional lifestyle of the elegiac *amator* as conventionally portrayed in the genre.

The brief epistle contains a lapidary coda encapsulating a philosophical stance that tactfully offers a solution to the dilemma (12–14):

> inter spem curamque, timores inter et iras
> omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum:
> grata superveniet, quae non sperabitur hora.
>
> amid hopes and anxieties, amid fears and bouts of anger believe that that every day that dawns is your last: any extra hour that comes without being hoped for will bring pleasure.

The enumeration of "hopes, anxieties, fears and bouts of anger" reads like a checklist of emotional disturbances that beset the typical *amator* of elegy. The φάρμακον recommended by the speaker is straight out of the Horatian *Carpe Diem* discursive brief, which, as has been noted, converges with the Epicurean ethical agenda summed up in an aphorism ascribed to the founder by Plutarch: "The person who has least need of tomorrow," as Epicurus says, "approaches tomorrow with the most pleasure."[41] After this sage counsel, the epistle ends on a typically Horatian note of self-deprecating tongue-in-cheek (15–16):

> me pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute vises,
> *cum ridere voles*, Epicuri de grege porcum.
>
> for my part, *whenever you want to relish a good joke*, you will find me
> glistening with fat and sleek of skin, a pig from Epicurus' herd.

40 οὐκ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως, οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως· συμπεφύκασι γὰρ αἱ ἀρεταὶ τῷ ζῆν ἡδέως, καὶ τὸ ζῆν ἡδέως τούτων ἐστὶν ἀχώριστον (*Men.* 132).

41 ὁ τῆς αὔριον ἥκιστα δεόμενος," ὥς φησιν Ἐπίκουρος, ἥδιστα πρόσεισι πρὸς τὴν αὔριον (Plut. *De tranq. anim.* 474c). Cf. Arrighetti 1973, 242. The persona of Natura utters a similar sentiment in her apostrophe at Lucr. 3.957–958.

The joke relies on the recipient's presumed knowledge that the popular misrepresentation of Epicureans as practicing an overindulgent life-style – especially in regard to gourmandise as enshrined in the iconic pig – is a radical distortion of the master's preaching. From elevated beginning to jocular end, the epistle's course of prescriptive thought regarding the preconditions for a tranquil life is explicitly framed by Epicurean ethical coordinates.

To revert to our discussion of the ode to Tibullus, the author advises the elegist to avoid pain by relinquishing his passionate yearning for "Glycera" (a name signifying "sweetheart"), who squarely belongs to the type of Greek courtesan exemplified by Pyrrha. The patent interchangeability of the named ἑταῖραι in Horace's warning example is an important part of the message – a point not without ironic import, since the very same appellation, "Glycera," appears in three other odes to designate passionately desired *amatae* of the poet (*Carm*. 1.19.5, 1.30.3 and 3.19.28).

The lyrist then goes on to describe an unhappy love triangle involving two courtesans, Lycoris and Pholoe, and an unfortunate male, Cyrus, and he caps the account with the gnomic observation that Venus takes a sadistic delight in joining mismatched lovers. In the final strophe of *Albi ne doleas*, the speaker rounds off his amatory counsel with a pseudo-biographical confession of a past love affair that is especially pertinent to our theme:

> ipsum me *melior* cum peteret *Venus*,
> grata detinuit compede *Myrtale*
> *libertina*, fretis acrior Hadriae
> curvantis Calabros sinus.
>
> I myself at a time when *a better Venus* was beckoning me,
> was held in pleasing bondage to the *ex-slave, Myrtale* –
> a love more acrimonious than the waves of the Adriatic
> where it curves into the gulf of Calabria.

The reference to a "better Venus" has primarily ethical, rather than social application: the poet is gesturing towards a more care-free erotic relationship that would have liberated him from the emotional roller-coaster he experienced in his bondage to Myrtale. Though his subjugation to a *libertina* is said to have been temporarily "pleasing" (*grata*), there lurks in Horace' use of the "sea of love" trope the clear premonition of the unpleasing fluctuations endemic to an inferior species of *amor*. The notoriously turbulent waves of the southern Adriatic recall the emblematic "seas grown rough with darkening gales" encountered by the hapless *puer* of the Pyrrha ode. The concept of a "better Venus" holds out the prospect to the elegiac *amator* of a superior form of *voluptas* unspoilt by *dolor*.

So far, our discussion of dialogic affiliations in the *Carmina* with Epicurean precepts on how to avoid an *amor infelix* has been directed at extrapolating a didactic purpose from the depiction of the potential dangers to be encountered on the rough waters (*aequora aspera*; *fretis Hadriae*) of erotic experience. A more overt example of Horace's role as teacher in matters amatory occurs in *Carm*. 2.9, which is addressed to a friend (*amice*, 5) and fellow-poet, C. Valgius Rufus. The nature of the friendship between the fellow-poets provides a useful frame of reference for the ode's didactic predilections, for Valgius was a beloved member of a social network of poets of the Augustan era that included Horace and Vergil as well as less celebrated contemporary authors.[42] He is known to have been a composer of amatory elegies (*Amores*, 11), an immensely popular genre in the late Republican era, though his output did not gain him entry into the canon that included Tibullus and Propertius. Horace lists him prominently among literary friends whose critical judgment he especially esteemed in regard to the reception of his first book of *Sermones*. Since several members of the network are reputed to have participated to varying degrees in philosophical studies led by emigré Epicurean philosophers active in the Neapolitan area, it is highly probable that the scholar-poet, Valgius, was familiar with the basic teachings of the Garden.

The thematic tenor of Horace's ode, which some have found difficult to gauge, resonates with the kind of open criticism among friends that was advocated by the founder of the school – a tenor that is strikingly foregrounded in the appositional phrase of the opening line of *Epist*. 1.4 discussed above in connection with the ode addressed to Tibullus: *nostrorum sermonum* ***candide iudex***. Readers familiar with the fundamental textual sources of the school will be aware that the doctrine of "frank criticism" (παρρησία) was an important component of the practice in Epicurean communities, and that Philodemus authored an extant, though lamentably lacunose, treatise on the subject entitled *De libertate dicendi*.[43]

The first five strophes of the Valgius ode (2.9) purvey the lyrist's candid advice to his friend who is stuck in interminable lament for his deceased love-partner:[44]

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42 On the scope of Valgius' literary output see *RE* 3, 274–276. In the famous satire that recounts Horace's "Journey to Brundisium" (1.5), Valgius figures prominently as a close friend and participant, along with Vergil and others, in the "Campanian" circle of poets.

43 For the text of Philodemus' treatise, see the bilingual edition by the team of scholars, Konstan *et al.* 1998.

44 The examples the poet cites from epic legend later in the poem (Antilochus and Troilus, 13–16) are an incontrovertible indication that the phrase *Mysten ademptum* in verse 10 refers to the young lover's death. Nisbet/Hubbard 1978, 146 on 13 point out that the epithet, *amabilem,* applied to the young Antilochus, is "capable of erotic implications." Cf. its use in the Pyrrha ode, discussed above.

Non semper imbres nubibus Histricos[45]
manant in agros aut mare Caspium
vexant inaequales procellae
usque, nec Armeniis in oris,
amice Valgi, stat glacies iners
mensis per omnes aut Aquilonibus
querqueta Gargani laborant
et foliis viduantur orni:
tu *semper* urges flebilibus modis
Mysten ademptum, nec tibi Vespero
surgente decedunt amores
nec rapidum fugiente solem.
at non ter aevo functus amabilem
ploravit omnis Antilochum senex
annos, nec inpubem parentes
Troilon aut Phrygiae sorores
flevere *semper*. Desine mollium
tandem querellarum et potius nova
cantemus Augusti tropaea
Caesaris et rigidum Niphaten,
Medumque flumen gentibus additum
victis minores volvere vertices,
intraque praescriptum Gelonos
exiguis equitare campis.

Not without end do clouds shed rain on Istrian
fields, nor do enormous storms rough up
the Caspian Sea, nor does rigid ice persist
on Armenian shores for months *without end*,
Valgius, my friend, nor are the groves
of oak on Garganus continuously pummeled
by Northern gales, nor do the ash trees
always stand bereft of their leaves.
You lament *without end* your loss of Mystes
in mournful strains, nor do your love-poems
cease either when Vesper is rising in the west
or fleeing the rapid sunlight in the east.
Yet even old Nestor whose life spanned
three generations did not lament his beloved
son, Antilochus, for years on end, nor did
his parents or his Phrygian sisters weep
without end for young Troilus.
Bring to a close your delicate complaints

45 With Harrison 2017, 33, I here depart from Klingner's text in favoring the emendation, *Histricos*, in place of the ms. reading, *hispidos*.

and in their place let us praise the victories
of Augustus Caesar over ice-bound Niphates;
the river of the Medes, added to the roster
of territories under our sway and forced to swirl
in smaller eddies; the Geloni confined to riding
their war horses within circumscribed plains.

The rhetorical scaffolding of the ode consists in a variation on the so-called *recusatio*,[46] in which the lyrist urges the addressee to set aside his persistent complaints in elegiac verse (9) and join him instead in composing an encomium on the military exploits of Augustus. Our exposition of ethical undercurrents will focus, not on the abbreviated encomium with which the poem ends, but rather on the grounds the lyrist advances for abandoning elegiac themes (*mollium querellarum*).

The objections raised against the conventional complaints of the elegiac *amator* are directed at their endemic philosophical defects. The first two strophes foreground the principal defect in markedly redundant terms: the amatory elegist ignores the fact that change is intrinsic to the natural order, as illustrated most vividly by meteorological phenomena. Rainstorms, for example, do not fall forever, neither do storms at sea or wintry weather conditions. In short, Albius' fixation on his loss fails to draw the lesson provided by nature regarding the need to adapt to change. The observation is heavily emphasized by the threefold repetition of the word *semper* ("always") which occupies the start of verses positioned precisely eight lines apart (cf. *non semper*, 1; *tu semper*, 9; *flevere semper*, 17).[47] Further amplifying the stress on the unlimited duration of grief is the repetition of the word *omnis* modifying "months" and "years" (*mensis per omnis*, 7; *omnis* [. . .] *annos*, 14–15). These carefully placed reiterations carry more thematic weight than the collateral tedium they may evoke in the listener, for they gesture toward the need for all humans – not merely the *amator* of elegy – to learn from nature about the necessity of imposing a temporal limit on the expression of acutely disruptive emotions.

The determination of what philosophical attitude mortals should adopt in relation to death was a major issue explored in Epicurus's ethical discourse and is well documented in the corpus of his extant writings and testimonia. The most terse formulation of the school's position on the subject – considered in the

46 The *recusatio* convention is often narrowly misconceived as uni-directional in its "rejection" of a higher genre, such as epic, in favor of a lower, such as elegy. In this instance, the direction of choice is from low to high.

47 Cf. the repetition of *semper* – with similar philosophical implications – in the Pyrrha ode discussed above.

broadest terms – occurs in the collection of the master's *Ratae sententiae*: "Death is nothing to us, for what has been dissolved has no sense-experience, and what has no sense-experience is nothing to us."[48] Whereas the focus of this famous saying is on an individual's fear of his own death, the orientation of the ode to Valgius is towards the related topic of the appropriate response to the death of a beloved other. From the latter perspective, the question as to what extent one should remain in a state of grief was frequently broached not only by critics of the Garden but also within Epicurean circles. The founder's position on the subject is known to posterity from several sources; not surprisingly, in light of the very high value the school placed on close friendships, the orthodox stance was favorable to the full expression of grief over the demise of a favorite companion, as transmitted in the following testimony of Plutarch:[49]

> τοῖς ἀναιροῦσι λύπας καὶ δάκρυα καὶ στεναγμοὺς ἐπὶ ταῖς τῶν φίλων τελευταῖς μάχονται καὶ λέγουσι τὴν εἰς τὸ ἀπαθὲς καθεστῶσαν ἀλυπίαν ἀφ᾽ ἑτέρου κακοῦ μείζονος ὑπάρχειν, ὠμότητος ἢ δοξοκοπίας ἀκράτου καὶ λύσσης· διὸ πάσχειν τι βέλτιον εἶναι καὶ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ νὴ Δία λιπαίνειν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ τήκεσθαι, καὶ ὅσα δὴ παθαινόμενοι καὶ γράφοντες ὑγροί τινες εἶναι καὶ φιλικοὶ δοκοῦσι.
>
> They [The Epicureans] disagree with those who would do away with grief and tears and lamentation at the death of friends, and say that an absence of grief that renders us totally insensible stems from another greater evil: hardness or a passion for notoriety so inordinate as to be insane. Hence they say that it is better to be moved somewhat and to grieve and to melt into tears and so with all the maudlin sentiment they feel and put on paper, getting themselves the name of being soft-hearted and affectionate characters.

What the Epicureans deplored, then, was not the expression of grief per se, but its immoderate prolongation, as manifested in the parallel outpourings exhibited by the elegist in the odes to Valgius and to Tibullus (cf. the poet's opening remonstrance to the latter: *Albi ne doleas plus nimio*). Moderation was a cardinal element in the ethical canon of the Garden. Epicurus recommended that, when faced with the loss of a dear friend, one should console oneself with the recollection of past happiness shared with the deceased.

In the course of his portrayal of Valgius's intense, uncontrolled grief over the demise of his beloved Mystes, Horace alludes to Vergil's lines describing Orpheus' inability to relinquish his extravagant grief over the death of Eurydice in his

48 ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· τὸ γὰρ διαλυθὲν ἀναισθητεῖ· τὸ δ᾽ ἀναισθητοῦν οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς (KD 2). Cf. *Men.* 124.

49 Plut. *Non posse* 1101ab. Translation is by Einarson/De Lacy 1967. For a sophisticated treatment of the topic of the Epicurean conception of friendship and its apparent contradictions, see Mitsis 2020.

mythological coda to *Georgica* 4. The Vergil passage depicts the conduct of the poet-musician, Orpheus, the paradigm of the inconsolable bereaved *amator*, in an apostrophe to Eurydice's shade in the underworld: *te veniente die, te decedente canebat* ("he sang of you while the day was dawning and when it was declining"). Horace appears to echo his fellow-poet's words in his criticism of Valgius's excesses (12) Though Vergil's narratives typically display overt empathy for the suffering of a bereft lover, the Orpheus tale shares with Horace's lyric argument an underlying critique of an *amator* whose profuse lamentations in song fail to observe reasonable bounds.

The common denominator of Vergil's critique of Orpheus' hyper-excessive grief for his lost Eurydice and Horace's objections to the interminable laments by the elegists, Tibullus and Valgius, lies in its demonstrably Epicurean slant. The root of their shared philosophical perspective on unhappy *amo*r is their conviction that irrational obsession with a unique *amatus/a* makes the lover vulnerable to mental instability of the kind that can only be cured by a correct understanding of the limits to be imposed on both "empty" desires and *dolor*, if the long-term attainment of stable *eudaimonia* and unmixed *voluptas* is to be fulfilled.

The coherent subtext of "conversations" between the lyrist and the therapeutic prescriptions of the Garden indicates that the poetic explorations of ethical issues in poetry are fundamentally trans-generic in scope. In Horace's case, as we have seen, the line of interrogation of the roots of an *amor infelix* is common to all the genres in which he was a supreme practitioner: *Sermones*, *Epistulae* and *Carmina*; the same is true of his close friend and fellow poet, Vergil, whose profound critique of the pathological variant of *amor* comprehends all the types of poetry in his corpus: *Bucolica* (the lovers, Corydon and Gallus), *Georgica* (the figure of Orpheus), the *Aeneid* (the tragic *amor* of Dido). In the representative selection of Horatian odes we have discussed in this paper, the critique of the ardent *puer* of the Pyrhha ode and of the elegists/*amatores*, Tibullus and Valgius in *Carm*. 1.33 and 2.9, are framed in terms of the ethical values characteristic of the Epicurean canon.[50]

50 In her perspicacious treatment of the topic of moral values in Horace's love lyric ("la morale de l'amour"), Délignon recognizes eclectic philosophical subtexts throughout the *Carmina* as a whole. In her discussions of *Carm.* 1.33, in particular, she reaches the conclusion: "la morale érotique des Odes repose donc à la fois sur une rupture avec la modèle élégiaque et sur des arguments d'origine épicurienne" (Delignon 2019, 58). In my view, as elaborated in this essay, the "elegiac model" corresponds closely to the type of *amor insanus* that is anathema to the philosophy of the Garden. On the privileging of specifically Epicurean ethical values in the Tribiblos, see my granular dissection of the programmatic *Carm*. 1.1 (Davis 2023).

Robert Hedrick III

Chapter 2
Evidence and Anger: Epicurean Cognition in the Finale of the *Aeneid*

The emotional outburst of "rage" and "anger" (*furiis* [. . .] *et ira*, 12.946) in the *Aeneid*'s final scene has garnered much critical analysis, yet scholars have devoted far less attention to how precisely Aeneas arrives at this condition.[1] Karl Galinsky, for instance, has written a series of articles offering Stoic, Peripatetic and Epicurean interpretations of the conclusion and argues that, while contrary to the tenets of Stoicism, the hero's emotions are consistent with the other philosophies.[2] He acknowledges "a strong rational element" as a motivational force for the hero's anger; exactly how this "rational element" works, however, and how Aeneas achieves cognition and knowledge merit further explanation.[3] Similarly, Michael Erler has analyzed anger in the *Aeneid* from an Epicurean perspective, differentiating Aeneas' anger, which he regards as unavoidable and not motivated by revenge, from Turnus' irascible disposition – what Epicureans call διάθεσις –, not simply Allecto's influence.[4] This essay supplements the work of Galinsky and Erler by reading the end of the *Aeneid* through an Epicurean lens, but goes further in distinguishing not

1 This essay is based on a paper delivered at the 2015 SCS conference on the panel "New Frontiers in Roman Epicureanism." It profited greatly from various readers' (several anonymous ones), respondents' and presenters' feedback, in particular Ben Hicks, Pam Gordon and Wilson Shearin, and especially from criticism by David Armstrong, Sergio Yona and Gregson Davis. Armstrong generously shared his manuscript of Philodemus' *De ira* by Armstrong/McOsker 2020. It also formed a portion of my dissertation and benefitted from suggestions from Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, Tim Stover and Francis Cairns. I thank all of these people for their help. Lastly, I wish to thank my wife Ashley for editorial help and for daily kindnesses that made this essay possible. I dedicate it to her with love. All errors that remain are, of course, my own. For anger in the *Aeneid*, see Thornton 1972; Galinsky 1988; Thomas 1991; Erler 1992b; Farron 1993; Galinsky 1994; Fowler 1997a; Galinsky 1997; Gill 1997; Wright 1997; Thomas 1998; Thomas 2001; Fish 2004; Indelli 2004; Wigodsky 2004. On passions and emotions in the *Aeneid*, see Horsfall 1995; Conte 2007; Polleichtner 2009; Nelis 2015; Schiesaro 2015. Cf. the articles on Stoicism, Epicureanism, Philodemus, Aristotle, Emotions, Turnus, "anger" and "*Aeneid*, ending of" in *VE* (Thomas and Ziolkowki 2014).

2 Galinsky 1988; Galinsky 1994; Galinsky 1997. For Peripatetic/Platonic readings, see Thornton 1972 and Wright 1997.

3 Galinsky 1988, 334.

4 Erler 1992b, 110. Galinsky 1994 and 1997 analyze Philodemus' views on anger and irascibility based on a person's disposition (διάθεσις). On dispositions in Epicureanism, see Grilli 1983, Annas 1989 and Procopé 1993.

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just the causes and effects of the protagonist's anger, but also their cognitive basis. While these scholars have shown that Aeneas' anger is not inconsistent with Epicureanism, I argue that his reasoning and actions also suit the school's empiricism. In particular, they are consistent with the philosophy's theory of ἐνάργεια, i.e. compelling and verifiable self-evidence, as the only foundation for knowledge and decision-making. Additionally, Virgil utilizes rhetorical or didactic ἐνάργεια by placing the scene before the audience's eyes and verbally stimulates them to *view* the scene for themselves and, thereby, to render judgment along with Aeneas from the evidence presented.

A few caveats are necessary first. While I admittedly offer a more positive and optimistic reading, I wish neither to denigrate "pessimistic" readings of the so-called Harvard School nor to limit the possibilities to any single interpretation.[5] Instead, I would agree with Edgeworth, who "contend[s] that each view is largely correct, but faulty in assuming that we must choose between the two."[6] I also do not intend to justify Aeneas' slaying of Turnus from a modern perspective (a war crime), but strictly from an ancient Epicurean one. My analysis does not require us to see a progression (or regression) in the hero's character – from Stoic or Epicurean neophyte to wise man – a point that has been the subject of numerous articles and monographs.[7] I am not arguing for Aeneas as an Epicurean sage, nor do I see Turnus as purely evil, and I appreciate analysis of the latter as a tragic figure – young and outmatched by Aeneas, doomed by his own fate and Rome's future.[8] Yet, many discussions, particularly the more negative ones, have a bias towards Stoicism, interpreting Aeneas' emotional reaction to Pallas' baldric as incompatible with that school's rejection of all emotions, especially anger. I grant that from a Stoic perspective, his anger and slaying of Turnus are blameworthy; however, many readers and perhaps Virgil himself would not have shared this Stoic outlook, so it is not appropriate to restrict our readings to this

5 In addition to Galinsky and Erler, more optimistic or "Augustan" readings of poem's ending include Pöschl 1962; Otis 1964; Scott 1978; Hardie 1986; Cairns 1989; Heinze 1993. More pessimistic readings include *i.a.* Parry 1963; Clausen 1964; Putnam 1964; Johnson 1976; Farron 1977; Farron 1981; Farron 1986; Lyne 1987; Lyne 1989; Putnam 1990; Thomas 1991; Farron 1993; Boyle 1993; Thomas 1998; Putnam 2011. For surveys of competing views, see Putnam 2003, Hardie 2014, 1–20 and the opening pages of Nelis 2015.

6 Edgeworth/Stem 2005, 8.

7 See Fuhrer 1989, which surveys studies of Aeneas' character.

8 See *i.a.* Van Nortwick 1980; Horsfall 1995; Thomas 1998. I agree with Armstrong's sentiment, *per litteras*: "His tragedy is one of immaturity. I can see why he seemed promising and distinguished to someone like Camilla. And why Virgil grants them both the same farewell line implying it's sad to die in the full vigor of youth."

philosophy.[9] At the same time, my interpretation does not necessitate imagining Virgil as having *been* an Epicurean while writing the *Aeneid* (although he may well have been), nor does it preclude us from recognizing other philosophical influences throughout it.

While we cannot know Virgil's philosophical beliefs, we can be certain that he was informed by literary and philosophical discussions of the time.[10] He was affiliated with the Epicurean school in Naples led by Siro and Philodemus and was a friend of Varius and Tucca, who famously edited the *Aeneid* after his death.[11] Papyri recovered from Herculaneum have corroborated Virgil's close engagement with this group as he was a dedicatee of Philodemus' *De vitiis*.[12] As Fabio Stok notes, "The papyrus thus confirms information given by Servius (*ad E*. 6.13; *ad A*. 6.264) about Vergil's Epicurean scholarship at the school of the philosopher Siro (who is mentioned in *Catal*. 5 and 8 as well)."[13] Therefore, we have a strong historical foundation for drawing on Epicurean sources including Epicurus himself and Philodemus to recognize how Aeneas' cognition is compatible with their visual theory. His reasoning from evidence would suit Aristotelian (or even Stoic) cognitive methods, but his reactions – chastising and slaying Turnus in anger, which I will show include the therapeutic use of frank speech and visualization before his victim's eyes – do not suit either Peripatetic notions of anger or Stoic ἀπάθεια.[14] In keeping with Epicurean principles, clear evidence, i.e. epistemological ἐνάργεια, leads

9 In the early twentieth century, critics often took it for granted that Virgil was Stoic (Frank 1920 and 1921 are notable exceptions, with Pease 1921 arguing the opposing view). Hahn 1934, 163, for instance, casually refers to "the Stoic writer of the *Aeneid*" (see also Bowra 1933). In recent years, Stoic bias has lessened, although it remains a common (mis-)conception. For Epicureanism, see Cairns 1989; Adler 2003; Armstrong *et al*. 2004; Kronenberg 2005. Virgil's earlier poems have often been interpreted as consistent with Epicureanism (see Chambert 2004); many scholars, however, have seen what Hardie 1986, 157 calls "a process of deconversion," from youthful Epicurean studies to a more Stoic or eclectic outlook. I agree with Indelli 2004, 107 that "one does not forget that, even if the Epicurean influence on the concept of anger Vergil possesses is undeniable, one need not overvalue the philosophical background relative to the poetic representation."

10 For Virgil's engagement with literary criticism, see Schlunk 1974. For eclecticism and links with Areius Didymus, see Cairns 1989, 34–37 and 2004, 313–314.

11 On Varius and Tucca, see Hollis 1977; Cairns 2004; Hollis 2007, 254–281. On friendship among Epicureans, see Armstrong 2011 and Yona 2018.

12 On the papyri of Philodemus, see Gigante 1995; for links to Virgil, see Armstrong *et al*. 2004. On the school in Naples, see Sider 1997, 3–24.

13 Stok 2010, 116.

14 On Epicurean versus Stoic anger, see Annas 1989; Procopé 1993; Asmis 2011. Cairns 1989, 79 notes: "The epicureans tried to pretend that while the stoics considered all anger to be evil, which in fact they did, the peripatetics regarded all anger as good, which in fact they did not."

Aeneas to sure knowledge and, in turn, this cognitive state compels him towards anger and killing Turnus.

ἐνάργεια in Epicurean Philosophy and δίδαξις

According to Epicureans all "criteria of truth" are founded upon self-evidence from sense-perception, which they called ἐνάργεια. It provides their sole arbiter for reasoning and knowledge.[15] In fact, they were often ridiculed for this precise claim, particularly for asserting that all knowledge and judgments – even those regarding unobservable aspects of the world (περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων) – must be based on "sense-perception" (αἰσθήσις) or arrived at "from appearances" (ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων).[16] Nevertheless, they remained steadfast: knowledge must be consistent with and based directly upon sense-impressions. Epicurus' theory of ἐνάργεια – thin films (εἴδωλα) that directly stamp themselves into the mind (Lucretius calls them *simulacra*, e.g. *DRN* 4.26) – accounts for the perfect transition from physical atomic impacts into mental data.[17] He states (*Hdt.* 10.50): "whatever impression we get by focusing our thought or senses, whether of shape or of properties, that is the shape of the solid body, produced through the image's concentrated succession or after-effect."[18] By his reasoning, true knowledge is guaranteed if and only if one keeps the mind focused strictly on self-evident truth, i.e. ἐνάργεια.

Cicero confirms the importance of ἐνάργεια in first-century Rome, the same setting in which Virgil was educated. In his *Academici libri*, he discusses the concept of ἐνάργεια, which he translates as *perspicuitas* and *evidentia* (2.17).[19] Therefore, we can infer that Epicurus himself and Epicureans of Virgil's time referred to sensory self-evidence as ἐνάργεια, a point that is further confirmed by Sextus Empiricus.[20] The fact that Sextus was still engaged in Hellenistic epistemological debates about ἐνάργεια in the second century CE testifies to the long-lasting importance of the concept in philosophical discourse. Similarly, the evidence from Cicero shows that anyone who studied philosophy (or rhetoric) during the late

15 See Long/Sedley 1987, 88–90 (henceforth L&S) and Striker 1996b.

16 DL 10.31–32 (L&S 16B).

17 According to Epicurus, errors are due entirely to opinion imposed upon sensation; see *Hdt*., DL 10.50 and Lucr. 379–386. Diogenes 10.28 names Περὶ εἰδώλων as one of Epicurus' works.

18 DL 10.50 (L&S 15A.9): καὶ ἣν ἂν λάβωμεν φαντασίαν ἐπιβλητικῶς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἢ τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις εἴτε μορφῆς εἴτε συμβεβηκότων, μορφή ἐστιν αὕτη τοῦ στερεμνίου, γινομένη κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς πύκνωμα ἢ ἐγκατάλειμμα τοῦ εἰδώλου.

19 L&S 68U. See also Cic. *Fin.* 1–2 for Cicero's position on Epicurean gnoseology.

20 *Math*. 7.203–210 (L&S 16E) and 7.211–216 (L&S 18A).

Republic assuredly confronted the question of a criterion of truth and the concept of ἐνάργεια.

In addition to its importance in philosophical discussions of the time, ἐνάργεια also refers to placing an object or a scene before the eyes (*ante oculos*) of the reader/listener in ancient literary criticism and rhetoric.[21] Knowledge of the different applications of ἐνάργεια allows us to correct an error made by Richard Heinze. Regarding the *Aeneid*'s visual imagery, he singles out "Virgil's skill in making the reader feel that he is experiencing the events himself, and achieving the maximum ἐνάργεια [vividness] by portraying the effect of an event on those who witness it, a technique derived from drama."[22] While astutely recognizing Virgilian ἐνάργεια, he erroneously attributes this practice solely to influence from tragedy (and we can assume, theoretical considerations of drama, such as Aristotle's *Poetica*).[23] It was not only a component of dramatic theory, but was also a rhetorical device and philosophical concept prevalent (and much debated) in all schools of the Hellenistic period. Similarly, Philodemus applies the procedure of visualization, which he calls "placing before the eyes," as a didactic and therapeutic exercise in his Epicurean pedagogy.[24] The aim is to keep one's behavior in line with an imagined model of proper reasoning or, conversely, to shun actions based on false opinion. Frederic Schroeder addresses the link between rhetoric and Epicurean visualization, calling it, "a rhetorical ἐνάργεια, a system of training the imagination to avoid the seduction of passion and attain peace."[25] Throughout *De libertate dicendi*, Philodemus articulates the need for frankness in order to "place before the eyes" a student's right and wrong actions.[26] Similarly in *De ira,* he crafts elaborate descriptions to bring the causes and effects of anger before one's eyes. ἐνάργεια as

21 See Zanker 1981. This procedure is often termed φαντασία or πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέναι/ποιεῖν; on ἐνάργεια and φαντασία in literature, see Webb 2009, Squire 2009 and Sheppard 2014 as well as entries for "vividness" and "visualization" in Russell/Winterbottom 1972.

22 Heinze 1993[= 1928], 131. Aristotle does not use the term ἐνάργεια in the *Rhetorica* or *Poetica*, although he has much to say about visualization, which he calls πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέναι/ποιεῖν (see *Poet*. 1455a22–26).

23 There is of course much influence of tragedy on the *Aeneid* (see the introduction to Austin 1955 and Hardie 1997). Nevertheless, Virgilian ἐνάργεια owes much to rhetorical and literary theory, as well as Epicureanism.

24 E.g. Phld. *De lib. dic.* 26: "Let us set before our eyes [τιθῶμεν δὲ πρὸ ὀμμάτων] also the difference that exists between a caring admonishment and an irony that pleases but pretty much stings everyone." Text and translation are from Konstan *et al*. 1998. For visualization in Epicurean therapy, see Nussbaum 1986; Armstrong 1993, 193–199; Tsouna 2003; Tsouna 2007; Tsouna 2011. For the complicated relationship between philosophical and rhetorical ἐνάργεια, see Hedrick 2015.

25 Schroeder 2004, 139.

26 See Tsouna 2003; Tsouna 2007, 195–238; Tsouna 2011.

visualization was therefore a common feature of both Epicurean epistemology and δίδαξις.

By broadening our study to include rhetorical and epistemological applications of ἐνάργεια in the *Aeneid*, we can see how Aeneas' reasoning and Virgil's rhetorical strategies are consistent with Epicurean theory, unlike other philosophical schools.[27] I will restrict my comments predominantly to the epic's concluding scene, concentrating on the hero's sensual input, emotional reaction and mental acts of judgment. Here, ἐνάργεια has a twofold function: 1) it provides objective sense-data, which Aeneas uses to make decisions; and 2) it allows the reader to visualize the scene before the mind's eye and to test whether the hero's decisions are consistent with observed phenomena.

Seeing and Hearing Turnus: Aeneas' Epicurean Cognition

Commenting on the end of *Aeneid* 6 where Aeneas leaves the underworld through the gates of ivory, Servius writes: "And we know that the things we say can be false, while those that we see are true without a doubt."[28] Here, the commentator articulates an important theme in the epic, the link between seeing and knowing.[29] It is a sentiment that Epicurus and his followers would surely have accepted. In the final scene, I suggest, Aeneas' sensation and reasoning lead him to sure knowledge; these, in turn, lead him to slay Turnus – a procedure that is consistent with Epicurean epistemology and ethics. A. J. Boyle writes that, "Every book [of the *Aeneid*] ends with a pictorial tableau or vignette, climaxing what is in effect iconic narrative."[30] This is the case in the poem's finale, as the reader is invited to view the scene and judge along with the characters. As long as all judgments – both internal to the story and external in the case of readers – are arrived at from clear evidence and do not admit false opinion, then according to Epicureans they must be deemed correct. From this perspective, Virgil integrates epistemic and rhetorical ἐνάργεια as Aeneas (and through his eyes the reader) sees proof of the crimes and grief caused by Turnus.

27 See Levy 1999.

28 *Ad A.* 6.893. Translation adapted slightly from Adler 2003, xv. On Servius, see Wallace 1938 and Fowler 1997b.

29 On vision in the *Aeneid*, see Smith 2005, Reed 2007 and Esposito 2016.

30 Boyle 1993, 87.

Before Turnus' death, the poet stresses the combatant's physical sensations, especially vision. Virgil writes (12.914–921):

> [. . .] tum pectore sensus
> vertuntur varii; Rutulos aspectat et urbem
> cunctaturque metu letumque instare tremescit,
> nec quo se eripiat, nec qua vi tendat in hostem,
> nec currus usquam videt aurigamve sororem.
> Cunctanti telum Aeneas fatale coruscat,
> sortitus fortunam oculis, et corpore toto
> eminus intorquet.
>
> Then, the senses within Turnus' breast alternate in different ways. He looks toward the Rutulians and the city, he hesitates fearfully, he trembles that death is looming over him: nowhere to escape, no strength left to aim at his enemy. He does not see a vehicle anywhere, nor his charioteer – his own sister. Aeneas shakes his deadly spear at his hesitant foe – deciding his fate with his eyes – and at a distance with all his force he launches it.[31]

At first, readers focalize through Turnus' eyes.[32] His fear intensifies as he *surveys* the battlefield (*Rutulos aspectat*), yet he *sees* (*videt*) no one to help him, not even his divine sister (*sororem*). As his vision attests, he is isolated and will not receive assistance. The gaze then shifts to Aeneas, shaking his spear, while "deciding his fortune with his eyes," (*sortitus fortunam oculis*). Although Tarrant translates this phrase as "choosing the opportune moment", my interpretation stems from the combination of *sortitus* and *fortunam*, which subscribes to Aeneas a Jovian role.[33] Earlier, Turnus enjoined himself and Juturna to "follow wherever god and fortune should lead" (*quo deus et quo dura vocat Fortuna, sequamur,* 12.677); here he finds that luck is out of his control. Aeneas becomes the arbiter of Turnus' fortune and he must decide whether his foe lives or dies, a decision that rests primarily on his sense of sight (*oculis*).[34]

31 Latin text for the *Aeneid* is from Mynors 1969 with "v" substituted for "u"; translations are my own.

32 On focalization in the *Aeneid*, see Fowler 2000 and Reed 2007. On Book 12, see West 1998 and for Turnus, see Thomas 1998 and Stahl 1990.

33 Tarrant 2012, 328. Similarly, Stahl 1990, 206 comments on Pallas' death: "What is of interest here for us is that the reader views the death of Pallas through the eyes of Aeneas, the mature man and father who is close to Jove in his attitude, but not from the viewpoint of the suffering young man himself. We thus feel even more the pain (and rage) of Aeneas (which is sanctified by the parallel grief of Jupiter)." For Jupiter in the poem, see Feeney 1991, 139–155.

34 For Jupiter's role as "arbiter of Fate," see Harrison 1991, 60.

Aeneas' reaction is swift and decisive, reported in the sentence's final two words, *eminus intorquet*, in enjambment.[35] There follows a series of similes in which Virgil compares his powerful throw to boulders flung from a catapult, then to lightning (921–923). The rhetoric builds as the weapon "flies through the air like a black whirlwind bringing a dire end with it" (*volat atri turbinis instar | exitium dirum hasta ferens*, 923–924). Elisabeth Henry views this passage in a negative fashion, arguing that the "onset of violence has given Aeneas the nature of an animal or elemental force."[36] Yet the comparison to a thunderbolt (*fulmine*, 922), as well as the weather imagery of a dark whirlwind (*ater turbo*, 923), sustains the Jovian imagery of the scene. Like Jupiter, Aeneas is judge and executioner.[37] To continue the forensic metaphor, he carefully weighs the evidence next, ensuring that it is unambiguous, before rendering a verdict and meting out justice.

This same sort of reasoning marks Epicurus' empirical method. Elizabeth Asmis summarizes "the Epicurean position" that "the evidence obtained directly by the perceptual organs is sufficient to show what is real, and moreover that all, and only, presentations obtained directly by the perceptual organs show perceptible reality."[38] Epicurus used a courtroom analogy to articulate his practice of inference from evidence. To avoid introducing false opinion, he established procedures called attestation (ἐπιμαρτύρησις) and contestation (ἀντιμαρτύρησις); with these, he claimed, we could make accurate inferences about clear and unclear phenomena, respectively, from what is self-evident (ἐνάργεια).[39] For our purposes, only attestation (ἐπιμαρτύρησις) is important, as it is through this that we check and confirm opinions about the sensible world by means of clear sense-evidence. For instance, we can test our opinion made at a distance, "that is Turnus," against clear visual evidence. By walking closer and having a distinct view, the initial opinion (δόξα) or supposition (ὑπόληψις) or thought (ἐννόημα) – which had been awaiting confirmation (προσμένον) – is either attested by evidence (ἐνάργεια), in which case it is confirmed to be true (it is in fact Turnus), or else it is not attested (i.e. μὴ ἐπιμαρτυρεῖ), then it is false (it is not in fact Turnus).

35 12.921. The verb *intorquere* also has Jovian connotations, see Estevez 1982.

36 Henry 1989, 166.

37 The traditional etymology for *dira* was from *dei ira*, so Aeneas' anger is like gods' and Jupiter's in particular (see Maltby 1991 and O'Hara 1996, 240). He becomes an instrument of divine wrath (*exitium dirum*). I thank Tim Stover for alerting me to this etymology and for assistance with the Jovian aspects of Aeneas.

38 Asmis 1984, 160.

39 *Hdt.* 10.51: "If it is not attested or is contested [i.e. by evidence, ἐνάργεια], it is false. On the other hand, if it is attested or else not contested, it is true." The translation is my own; text from Arrighetti 1973. On these procedures, see Dumont 1982; Asmis 1984; Striker 1996b; Asmis 1999; Allen 2001, 196–205; Asmis 2009; Ierodiakonou 2012.

We can apply the same procedure to the *Aeneid* by gauging Aeneas' sensory input and reasoning. At first, he holds back from killing Turnus, waiting for confirmation from clear evidence. He does not act rashly, but rather stops (*stetit*, 938), delays (*cunctantem*, 940), and restrains himself (*dextramque repressit*, 939). Details such as these, as Sheppard notes, are commonly remarked upon by ancient critics as they "enable the reader to visualize the whole [scene], filling gaps in a description or narrative for themselves."[40] They are the hallmarks of rhetorical ἐνάργεια, as we must imagine the described scene before our eyes. By paying attention to what is *seen*, we witness Epicurean attestation (ἐπιμαρτύρησις) at work. Aeneas examines his enemy closely with his eyes (*volvens oculos*, 939), placed mid-line and in the present tense to show that his gaze is ongoing and focused.[41] While he knows that Turnus killed his friend, he is at a loss about what to do next. How should he follow Anchises' advice from the epic's midpoint? Spare him as a suppliant or strike down the prideful (*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, 6.853)? Aeneas was not present to witness Turnus' killing of Pallas, nor the stripping of the corpse. He needs clear proof of Turnus' state of mind – according to Epicurean terminology, this is still "unclear" (ἄδηλον) and "awaiting confirmation" (προσμένον). William Anderson argues that the phrase *volvens oculos* does not denote suspiciousness, but rather: "Although under some circumstances the Trojan might suspect the motives of Turnus or doubt that, in the long run, he would remain defeated, such suspicions have no place at this particular moment in the *Aeneid* [. . .]. [N]o fair-minded reader could rightly question his honesty; and it follows that we cannot attribute to Aeneas suspiciousness."[42] But Aeneas *is* suspicious, and he has every reason to be.[43] So, he holds off from hasty reactions that could arise from false opinion and reserves final judgment until proof of criminal wrongdoing is self-evident.

For comparison, Philodemus utilizes the same empirical method. In *De ira*, he argues (37):

40 Sheppard 2014, 34–35.

41 For using present tense to achieve vividness, see Sheppard 2014, 34, who discusses passages in Aristotle's *Rhetorica, Sub.* And Quintilian, in which the "shifting of tenses (*tralatio temporum*)" is included "among the techniques for 'putting before the eyes' (*sub oculos subiectio*)." Tarrant 2012, *ad loc.* Comments that the phrase is "a sign of fierce concentration." While that is true, Aeneas is also looking for evidence in a manner that suits Epicurean ἐπιμαρτύρησις. For the phrase *volvens oculos*, contrast the violent imagery of Turnus' eye-movement at 12.670: *ardentis oculorum orbes ad moenia torsit*. Turnus' eyes are violent and distorted; Aeneas' survey all.

42 Anderson 1971, 63–64.

43 For the potential for a very different outcome, we can note the duel between Eteocles and Polynices in Statius' *Thebaid*, where the wounded Eteocles makes one final sword thrust to kill his brother who mistakenly believes him to be dead; see Ganiban 2007, 192–193.

> συνίσταται γὰρ ἀπὸ το[ῦ] βλέπειν, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἔχει τῶν πραγμάτων, καὶ μηδὲν ψευδοδοξεῖν ἐν ταῖς σ[υ]μμετρήσεσι τῶν ἑλα[ττ]ωμάτων καὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι τῶν βλαπτόντων.
>
> [Proper anger results] from seeing what the nature of states of affairs is, and from not having any false beliefs in our comparative calculations of our losses and in our punishments of those who harm us.[44]

With proper Epicurean reasoning, he stresses the importance of *seeing* (βλέπειν) clear evidence, i.e. "what the nature of states of affairs [really] is," a periphrasis for ἐνάργεια. This is achieved through the senses, particularly sight. The procedure is consistent with Epicurus' attestation, ἐπιμαρτύρησις. For Philodemus and Epicurus (and Aeneas), anger arises from a non-cognitive sensation, i.e. vision, and a cognitive element, including memory and a reasoned calculation (συμμέτρησις) of losses and gains, i.e. pain vs. pleasure, based on observable data. In accordance with Epicurean attestation, Aeneas' judgment *is* confirmed by self-evidence and does not introduce false opinion into the assessment of sensory input. Therefore, by the same reasoning his conclusion must be deemed correct. The anger that results from his sensation and knowledge is, in Philodemus' terminology, "natural" (φυσικήν), as opposed to "empty" (κενόν).[45] As tensions rise, Virgil portrays the combatants' actions and reactions with rhetorical ἐνάργεια, which suits Philodemus' method of "placing before the eyes."[46] Although in different genres (diatribe vs. epic), characters are nevertheless portrayed in a realistic fashion with details that draw attention to slight movements as well as visual impressions, which the audience must imagine. For instance, the Rutulians' reaction at lines 928–929 appeals to the readers' senses of sight (*consurgunt, mons, nemora alta*) and sound (*gemitu*, *vocem*). Like the textual audience, readers are invited to view and hear the contest, albeit in their minds.[47] Moreover, the pathetic groans and Turnus' talk (*sermo*, 940) briefly inspire Aeneas, as well as us, to look upon him with pity. Yet upon closer examination, Aeneas and (through his eyes) we see damning evidence (*saevi monimenta doloris,* 945).

Looking up, prostrate and wounded (*ille humilis supplex oculos dextramque precantem | protendens,* 930–931), Turnus assumes responsibility, saying he "deserves" this result (*merui nec deprecor*, 931). He encourages Aeneas to "exercise your lot," i.e. to treat him as he sees fit (*utere sorte tua*, 932). But then he switches

44 All translations and text for *De ira* are from Armstrong/McOsker 2020. On this passage, see Galinsky 1994, 197 and Asmis 2011, 157. More recently, Spinelli/Verde 2021, 316–332.

45 *Ir.* 38. See Indelli 2004, 104; Phil. *Mort.* 32 in Henry 2009; Asmis 2011.

46 *Ir.* 7.16–31.23. It is also similar to Horace's angry Stoic in *Sat*. 1.3 (thanks to Sergio Yona).

47 For textual audiences as models for readers' responses, see Walker 1993.

course – begging (*oro* [. . .] *miserere*) for mercy while appealing to Aeneas' paternal devotion (*miseri te si qua parentis | tangere cura potest, oro (fuit et tibi talis | Anchises genitor) Dauni miserere senectae*, 931–934). R. O. A. M. Lyne comments, "This appeal for clemency, which, it should be stressed, Turnus makes not on his own selfish behalf, is based on both emotion and reason."[48] Yet from an Epicurean perspective, his reasoning is faulty and he is employing doublespeak ("I deserve it, I won't beg off [. . .] please pity me"). He beseeches Aeneas to return him (i.e. still alive) or at least to return his "body despoiled of light" (*et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mavis, | redde meis*). Juan Luis de la Cerda perceptively comments: "It seems [*videtur*] as if Turnus asks what is perfectly fair, for he had himself sent back the body of Pallas with his armor."[49] But that is, of course, *not* what happened. Turnus' manipulative rhetoric obfuscates the option for Aeneas to despoil him of both *arms* and *life*, as Turnus did to Pallas.[50] His last words – begging Aeneas to cease his hatred (*ulterius ne tende odiis*, 938) – clarify his motive: avoiding death. Again, La Cerda helps: "Nothing more nervous [*trepidantius*] here than Turnus, for [. . .] in vicious people fear of death is more powerful than any pleasure [*timorem mortis potentiorem esse omni voluptate in vitiosis*]."[51] Turnus projects his own hatred onto Aeneas and displays the same fear of death railed against by Lucretius in Book 3 of *De rerum natura* and by Philodemus in his treatise *De morte*.[52] He applies false reasoning by clinging to life and not accepting death as a relatively trivial matter, what Epicurus and Lucretius call "nothing to us."[53]

Monimenta doloris

Only after *seeing* proof does Aeneas assent to the apparent facts: in his eyes, Turnus is guilty of criminal wrongdoing and therefore must be punished.[54] The

48 Lyne 1987, 187.

49 La Cerda 1612/1642, 781. Translations of La Cerda are by Armstrong, *per litteras*.

50 They are battling for *spolia opima*; see Martino 2008 and Flower 2000.

51 La Cerda 1617, 782.

52 Cf. Tsouna 2011, 187: "Philodemus suggests that emotions such as anger and the fear of death are in many cases empty emotions precisely because they often involve empty (i.e., both false and harmful) beliefs about their objects." For Philodemus, see Tsouna 2007 and Henry 2009; for Lucretius, see Wallach 1976 and Segal 1990; for links between them, see Fish 1998.

53 KD 2: ὁ θάνατος οὐδεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· Lucr. 3.830: *Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinent hilum*. Text for KD (DL 10.139) is from Dorandi 2013. Latin and translations for Lucretius are (slightly adapted) from Rouse/Smith 1992.

54 As to the possibility of pity (12.934: *miserere*), which Virgil holds out as a potential option, we can compare Cicero's (Stoic) definition of compassion (*misericordia*) as "distress arising from the

turning point comes when he gazes upon Pallas' sword-belt, which Virgil calls "the reminders/evidence of savage pain" (*saevi monimenta doloris*, 945).[55] The pain (*dolor*) is both personal – the killing and *savage* (from Aeneas' viewpoint) despoiling of a friend – and political – Pallas, the hope and salvation of Evander's throne (*spes et solacia nostri*, 8.514), had been committed into Aeneas' protection by his father as surety of their truce (*dextrae datae*, 10.517). Aeneas "drinks in the evidence and spoils with his eyes" (*oculis* [. . .] *monimenta* [. . .] *exuviasque hausit*, 12.945–946), a phrase that denotes not simply seeing, but rather grasping deeply despite the pain it causes. The expression alludes to Dido's last words in which she appeals to Aeneas' gaze and prays for him to drink in the blaze of her funeral pyre with his eyes.[56] It is the same sort of autopsy that Aeneas practiced in Book 8, while touring the Palatine and *seeing* (*vides* in a vivid second person form) the "remains and evidence of earlier generations" (*reliquas veterumque vides monimenta virorum*, 8.356).[57] In the latter instance, Virgil employs the same term, *monimenta*, as here to refer to visual evidence whose epistemic value is certain. Indeed, the monuments shown to him by Evander are also instructive about this very circumstance: just as Hercules slew the savage beast Cacus in *rage* and *anger* at *pain* (*Hic vero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro* | *felle dolor*, 8.219–220 and *fervidus ira*, 8.230), so too must Aeneas destroy Turnus (*furiis accensus et ira*, 12.946).[58] In both cases, clear vision brings sure knowledge. There is no longer any ambiguity about Turnus' crime nor about his deserved punishment: he has slain Aeneas' friend, ally or even surrogate son; he has despoiled the corpse and hubristically wears the arms; and he dissembles to avoid death.[59] We can recall

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wretchedness of a neighbor in undeserved suffering, for no one is moved by compassion for the punishment of a murderer or a traitor" (*Tusc.* 4.18). In Aeneas' eyes, Turnus is guilty of both crimes named by Cicero, as he is *parricida* (as killer of Pallas) and *proditor* (as oath-breaker of the truce; cf. *OLD s.v. parricida* 1299 and *proditor* 1472). Latin for the *Tusculanae disputationes* comes from Pohlenz 1918, English translation from King 1945.

55 For *saevus* in the *Aeneid*, see de Grummond 1981 and, with a very different conclusion, Knox 1997.

56 4.661–662: *hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto* | *Dardanus, et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis* ("let the cruel Dardanian from the deep sea drink in with his eyes this fire, and may he bear with himself the omens of my death").

57 The second person verb form *vides*, addressed to a textual character, also appeals to the reader to visualize (cf. the formula *nonne vides* in Lucretius, Schiesaro 1984). Indeed, contemporary readers would not have had to struggle much, as they could have looked around Rome itself.

58 See Galinsky 1966 and Effe 2002. Thornton 1972, 61 characterizes Hercules as "raised up as an example for Aeneas and set in relation to Augustus" and goes on, "It is plain that the fierce anger of Hercules is fully approved of by Virgil, because he has justice on his side."

59 On Pallas, see Erler 1992b, Gross 2003–2004 and O'Sullivan 2009.

Servius' assessment from earlier as Turnus' *talk* (*sermo*, 940) rings false, while what Aeneas *sees* "is true without a doubt." Suspicions of arrogance and dishonesty are confirmed when Aeneas sees visual proof: Turnus *still* wears Pallas' baldric on his shoulder – a *glaring* (*fulserunt*, 942) symbol of insult against the *boy's* body (*pueri*, 943 – a pathetic word choice). The reader is also cognizant of the difference between Turnus' prideful despoiling of Pallas (10.479–505) and Aeneas' pious treatment of Lausus (10.821–832), whom he allows to keep his weapons.[60] There, as Turnus gloated over his victim (*ovet spolio gaudetque potitus*, 10.500), Virgil offered an authorial aside *in propria persona* (501–505):

> nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae
> et servare modum rebus sublata secundis!
> Turno tempus erit magno cum optaverit emptum
> intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque
> oderit.
>
> Alas for the human mind, ignorant of fate and of its future lot and of how to preserve a limit, when buoyed by favorable circumstances.[61] There will come a time when the great Turnus wishes that he had kept Pallas intact and when he hates those spoils and that day!

This is precisely that moment – the hatred is that of Turnus, not Aeneas, but his destiny is the latter's to decide.[62] Furthermore, the audience knows that Rome's future – which Aeneas ensures by slaying Turnus (*condit*, 12.950) – rests upon the victory of Augustus' ancestor.[63]

Earlier in the epic, Aeneas had occasionally misread visual evidence, e.g. the walls of the temple in Carthage,[64] or had conspicuously lacked knowledge about what he saw, e.g. at the end of Book 8, where he is described as "marveling" and "rejoicing" in the images of his shield while remaining "ignorant of its subjects" (*miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet*, 8.730).[65] In the end, however, he is fully knowledgeable of clear facts. Any assessment such as Eve Adler of a "tension between Aeneas' ignorant rejoicing and Vergil's knowing sadness" needs to provide an adequate explanation for why at the poem's close Aeneas is patently not

60 10.827: *Arma quibus laetatus habe tua* [. . .]. On the mirroring scenes of Lausus and Pallas, see Stover 2011.

61 The stress on limits and avoiding excess is reminiscent of Aristotle's Golden Mean, but it also is consistent with Epicurean teachings; see Yona 2018, 153–154.

62 12.920: *sortitus fortunam oculis*; 931: *utere sorte tua*.

63 For Turnus' criminal actions and Aeneas' moral judgment, see Galinsky 1988 and Stahl 1981 and 1990. For an alternative, see Thomas 1991.

64 See Clay 1988 and O'Sullivan 2009.

65 For other expressions of ignorance, particularly *inscius* and *nescius*, see Johnson 1976, 75–87 and Lyne 1987, 196–200.

ignorant, but instead sees Turnus' guilt clearly.[66] Johnston notes the relevance of Epicurean views on friendship to the scene, arguing that "Aeneas' devotion to his companions is reminiscent of the importance of friendship in Philodemus' circle."[67] We can go further with this line of reasoning. From an Epicurean perspective, the *monimenta* arouse the memory of Aeneas' deceased friend by moving material εἴδωλα in his mind and bringing his rival's wrongdoing and pain (*dolor*) directly before his eyes (and the reader's). Virgil's word for pain, *dolor*, is the same as that used by Cicero in the *Tusculanae disputationes* in noting (with extreme prejudice) Epicurus among the foremost philosophers who "pronounce pain to be the chief evil."[68] According to Epicureans, this pain is physical and real, and results in *natural* anger.

Critics have often debated why Aeneas is overcome not just with anger (*ira*) but also with rage (*furiis*, 946–947) – equivalent to Greek θυμός–, which Galinsky notes "Philodemus considers inappropriate."[69] Philodemus is actually more nuanced on θυμός. In contrast to the Stoics, Epicureans accepted anger (ὀργή) from a person with a proper disposition (διάθεσις) arising from empirical autopsy of self-evident wrongdoing. Francis Cairns has argued that while *furor* is fully negative throughout the poem, *furiae* can actually have a positive association, a possibility that seems to be the case in the Hercules-Cacus passage and the end.[70] Don Fowler criticizes this view: "no one who wished to take a positive view of anger would use phrases such as "inflamed by fury [or the Furies] (*furiis accensus*)."[71] Yet, the fire (*accensus*, 946) of anger and fury, which overcomes Aeneas, is not sufficient for us to conclude that there is a complete absence of *ratio* from his mind.[72] For Epicureans, anger – both natural or empty – is always instanced together with heat, just as coldness is linked to fear and calmness to air (see Lucr. 3.288–322). Lucretius explains (3.288–289): *est etiam calor ille animo, quem sumit, in ira | cum fervescit et ex oculis micat acrius*

66 Adler 2003, 234. In using "guilt," I am speaking from Aeneas' viewpoint.

67 Johnston 2004, 173 n.23.

68 *Tusc.* 2.15. Here Cicero refers to this as a "spineless, effeminate doctrine" (*enervatam muliebremque sententiam*). Latin is from King 1927; translation is my own.

69 Galinsky 1988, 336. For θυμός vs. ὀργή, see Tsouna 2007, 298.

70 For *furor*/*furiae* in the *Aeneid*, see Cairns 1989, 83–84 and Thornton 1972, 60–62. Cairns 1989, 84 argues that "*furor* is beyond the moral pale, but this is not the case with *furiae*," and discusses the end scene and the Hercules episode. For alternate views, see Otis 1964; Lyne 1983 and 1989, 24–29 and Thomas 1991 index for *furor*.

71 Fowler 1997a, 33.

72 Gilmartin 1968, 43 sees an ethical difference between Hercules' rage and Aeneas': "Hercules fights fury (*furiis Caci mens effera* 205) with fury, as Aeneas must also (*furiis accensus et ira*/*terribilis*, 12.946–7), but Aeneas' rage is roused by injuries done to others, not to himself [Hercules is enraged because of the theft of his cattle] [. . .]. Aeneas is selfless as Hercules never is."

ardor ("The mind also has that heat, which it takes on when it boils in anger and fire flashes more fiercely from the eyes)." Aeneas' character, while it blazes with anger on occasion, is not generally irascible; on the other hand, Turnus exemplifies irascibility and violence. Julia Annas notes, "Achilles' kind of anger [pervasive μῆνις] is ruled out"; but David Armstrong and Michael McOsker clarify that, "[Philodemus] is skeptical about the violence of Achilles's empty anger but confident in the validity of Odysseus' natural anger, even against the suitors and the maids."[73] It is not surprising then that on three occasions (at 9.792, 10.454 and 12.6) Virgil compares Turnus to a lion – the very animal that Lucretius singles out as having an "angry mind that easily boils in anger" (*iracundaque mens facile effervescit in ira*, 3.295), possessing "violent fury" (*vis* [. . .] *violenta leonum*, 3.296), and as being "unable to control the waves of anger in its breast" (*nec capere irarum fluctus in pectore possunt*, 3.298). In contrast, while Aeneas experiences anger – even severe as in the final scene – this emotion is temporary and not due to an irascible disposition.[74] He is never compared to a lion, although he is likened to Hercules, the lion-slayer par excellence (e.g. 8.295).[75] Virgil even calls such emotions "just" at several points: *iustae* [. . .] *irae*, 10.714; *furiis* [. . .] *iustis*, 8.494.[76]

In the end, Virgil's usage of *ira* and *furiis* seem to be consistent with Philodemus' teaching that "the wise man will [. . .] be said to be capable even of rage [θυμός]; [. . .] [as] we are accustomed to use this appellation for the most general case, but [. . .] not [. . .] for something intense in its greatness or for an impulse (to revenge) *as if to something enjoyable*" (italics are my own).[77] Even in an inflamed state, Aeneas does not take vengeance, but instead exacts *punishment* (*poenam*, 949), albeit a capital one, which is consistent with the Epicurean view of the social contract.[78] Contrary to Peripatetics, for whom anger includes the pleasure of ven-

73 Annas 1989, 162; Armstrong/McOsker 2020, 16. For natural emotions, see Asmis 2011.

74 Putnam 1990, 13 takes the opposite view: "If Aeneas does possess an inclination to forgive it is certainly not his ruling emotion as he prepares to kill Turnus. ὀργιλότης [Cicero's *iracundia*/irascibility] controls his thinking, not πραότης [Cicero's *lenitas*/mildness], *ira*, not *lenitas* or the *clementia* to which it might give form." But a disposition is not a momentary "ruling emotion": Aeneas is angry, Turnus is irascible.

75 See Zarker 1972.

76 See Horsfalls 1995, 213.

77 *Ir.* 44.1–8: καὶ θυμ[οῦ τοί]νυν δεκτικὸς εἶναι ρηθήσεται[ι] ὁ σοφός, ᾗ που κἀπὶ τὸ κοινότατον εἰώθαμεν φέρειν ταύτην τὴν προσηγορίαν. ᾗ δ'ἐπὶ τὸ σύντονον κατὰ [τ]ὸ μέγεθος ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ὡς πρὸ[ς] ἀπ[ολ]αυστὸν ὁρμήν, οὐ δήπουθε[ν ε]ἴπαιμεν ἄν.

78 See Thrasher 2013. From a modern perspective we certainly disagree that the crimes necessitate the death penalty; nevertheless, from a Roman (and Epicurean) perspective, Turnus' trucebreaking and killing/despoiling Aeneas' friends would certainly be capital crimes.

geance,[79] Philodemus explains that anger is always *painful* – "it offers nothing sweet – but [the sage] approaches it as something most necessary but most unpleasurable, like drinking wormwood or the doctor's knife."[80] Turnus took joyful pleasure in despoiling Pallas (*ovet spolio gaudetque potitus*, 10.500), inspiring Virgil's authorial interjection; but in slaying Turnus Aeneas does not. Punishing *in anger* without taking pleasure is acceptable according to Epicureanism.[81] As Armstrong has shared with me, for Philodemus chastising (κόλασις) – which Aeneas' *poena* seems to be an example of – is the "positive counterpart" to vengeance (τιμωρία), which is "used pejoratively." Aeneas' anger would therefore be "good" or "natural" because it is grounded upon the "impression [ἔμφασις = Epicurus' φαντασία] of damage done *intentionally* to oneself (or one's friends, 41.18–20), ἔμφασις βλάβης ἑκουσίας, 40.33–38."[82] His sensory *impression* is clear and accurate, as Turnus has assuredly harmed his friend; clear visual evidence moves him to anger and to punish his enemy in the name of Pallas. By Epicurean standards we must not assess his action to be vengeance, but rather chastising punishment exacted at the cost of the criminal's blood (*poenam scelerato ex sanguine*, 12.949).[83] His words are a piece of Epicurean frank speech, παρρησία, as he states the nature of the offense, vocalizes Pallas' name twice to rebuke Turnus and claims the death-stroke as penalty.[84] Just

79 Annas 1989, 155 notes, "In defining anger, Aristotle *(Rh.* 1378b3) observes that "a certain pleasure always accompanies anger," tracing this to the pleasure we take in expecting to achieve our aims and to the pleasure of dwelling on the thought of retaliation." See also Procopé 1993 and Gill 2004.

80 *Ir*. 44.16–22: [οὔτε ὡς πρὸς] [ἀ]πο[λαυστ]ὸν (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡδ[ύ] τι προσφέρεται) ἀλλ'ὡς πρὸ[ς] ἀναγκαιότατον, ἀηδέστατον δὲ παραγίνεται, καθάπερ ἐπὶ πόσιν ἀψινθίου καὶ τομήν. For wormwood imagery, cf. Lucr. 1.936–50 and Phld. *De lib. dic.* 2b.2–7.

81 See Erler 1992b, 116.

82 Armstrong, *per litteras*. Tsouna 2007, 222 summarizes Philodemus' view of proper anger and punishment: "persons who have a good disposition hold true beliefs about how things are, correctly appraise the nature of the offense and the magnitude of the damage, and on that basis, seek the offender's due punishment."

83 Nethercut 1972, 14 compares 2.575–276 (Aeneas' anger to punish Helen during Troy's fall), noting that "*poena*, *sceleratus* and *sumere* are found together on only one other occasion in the *Aeneid.*" While he rightly recognizes the similarity, he neglects to address the difference between the passages; whereas earlier Aeneas angrily wishes to exact wicked punishments (*sceleratas sumere poenas*), here he doles out punishment from a criminal (lit. from his criminal blood: *poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit*). The line recalls Aeneas' words at 8.538, as Gross 2003–2004, 151 notes: "With *quas poenas mihi dabis* ("What penalties you will pay to me, Turnus"), Aeneas foresees Turnus' death by his very own [. . .] hand." In these instances, Aeneas stresses that Turnus will pay a criminal penalty, not receive vengeance.

84 Theodorakopoulos 1997, 164 stresses memory – both the reader's and Aeneas' – in the scene: "The killing of Turnus is an act of memory, and this memory is not merely that of the character Aeneas, but also that of the reader, and of the poet, who twice repeats the name of the Arcadian

as Virgil places the scene before the reader's eyes, so too does Aeneas place the crime before the wrongdoer's.

From a Stoic perspective, Lyne is right to argue: "And why does he not spare him in the end? Because of grand passion, as Turnus had feared ('Press no further in hatred'), in particular because of the passion that consists, according to Stoic doctrine, in the desire for revenge."[85] In Stoic terminology, Aeneas has experienced a *cognitive impression* (καταληπτικὴ φαντασία); its veracity is without any doubt and therefore his assent (συγκατάθεσις) to its truth is also assured.[86] Stoics argued that a cognitive impression "all but seizes us by the hair [. . .] and pulls us to assent [συγκατάθεσις]."[87] For them, Aeneas' assent to the impression – even that Turnus deserves death – would be acceptable; his response would not. According to Stoicism, one's response or impulse (ὁρμή) always remains in one's control; it is "up to us" (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).[88] By surrendering to anger rather than exacting punishment dispassionately, Aeneas' emotions would be inappropriate in their eyes and he would be guilty of wrongdoing. From an Epicurean perspective, however, Aeneas' motivations and reactions come into focus; his anger is not due to an irascible disposition, but rather is natural; his assessment is accurate because it is based on objective criteria and does not introduce false opinion.[89] His re-

(*A*. 12.948–949 *Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas* | *56audium56*), just as, near the end of *Eclogues* 10, he repeats the name of Gallus, who tried and failed to become an Arcadian (*Ecl*. 10.72–3 *vos haec facietis maxima Gallo,* | *Gallo*)." We can add that the last line (12.952) is repeated verbatim from 11.831 (the death of Camilla).

85 Lyne 1987, 188 and 1983 recognizes shortcomings from a purely Stoic reading but does not offer an Epicurean alternative. For readings that see Aeneas as undergoing a transformation into a Stoic sage, see especially Heinze 1993 [= 1928] and Bowra 1933 and the challenge of Lyne 1987, 166, with further bibliography. Putnam notes 1990, 26: "Turnus' word is *odium* [938], the narrator's *ira* [at 946]." In this shift of vocabulary, I see Virgil offering a correction: what Turnus claims to be *hatred* is actually (natural/justified) *anger*.

86 On the *kataleptic* impression, see Sandbach 1971.

87 Sext. Emp. *Math*. 7.255 (L&S 40K).

88 See Annas 1993, 64.

89 On Aeneas' short-lived anger and rage, Clausen 2002, 196–197 writes: "And yet, in recognizing the Homeric warrior, the reader should be careful not to make Aeneas more ruthless than Virgil intended. Aeneas fights grimly, but for the most part against his will – never, like Turnus, for the mere animal joy of fighting – and wishes there was a better way." His character and disposition are consistently *not* irascible, but rather thoughtful and (famously) pious. Aeneas has neither "false beliefs" nor "a bad disposition," which are criticized by Philodemus as causes of improper anger (Annas 1989, 148). Cf. Tsouna 2007, 222–230. Also Galinsky 1988, 341: "Aeneas listens to Turnus' plea, and it makes him hesitate. Humane sensibility and concern are not an ephemeral affair in the *Aeneid* – in contrast to the end of the *Iliad*, for example – but an ongoing characteristic of both the epic and its hero. The humanity of the hero [. . .] leads to his dilemma, and that dilemma, in turn, reinforces the hero's humanity."

sponse too offers further proof of a proper cognitive foundation as he does not exact revenge, but rather *punishment* for a reason, which is placed before Turnus' eyes.

Concluding Thoughts

According to my Epicurean reading, Virgil engages his audience and his characters in rhetorical and epistemological ἐνάργεια. Readers visualize the described scenes and judge whether the hero's reasoning accords with sense perception and proper ethical concerns. Simultaneously, the characters, principally Aeneas, examine what they see and make decisions based on either proper or faulty reasoning. In the end, Turnus is not, as Pöschl claims, "resigned to his fate, however hard it may be."[90] The focalization shifts to him in the final line (*vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras*, 952) but his mind and life (*vita*) are described as *indignata*, resentful of death – the opposite of a proper Epicurean attitude.

The final line has an important intertextual reference to Lucretius, which to my knowledge has gone unnoted. Many have commented on links between Virgil's line and Hector's death in the *Iliad*, where he "bewails his fate as he loses his manhood and youth."[91] Virgil writes, instead, that Turnus' "life resentfully (*indignata*) flees with a groan down to the shades", repeating the line verbatim from Camilla's death (11.831).[92] Even in death, he persists in thinking himself undeserving (*indignata*) of punishment, contrary to what he has just stated (*merui nec deprecor*, 931). Virgil is not merely translating Homer; rather, he adds *indignata*, offering an omniscient, authorial judgment of his soul with an ethical coloring informed by Lucretius.[93] Indeed, he uses the same verb in chiding philosophers who are *indignant* before death.[94] Segal summarizes the Epicurean sentiment:

90 Pöschl 1962, 136.

91 *Il.* 22.362–363: ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων πταμένη Ἄϊδος δὲ βεβήκει | ὃν πότμον γοόωσα λιποῦσ' ἀνδροτῆτα καὶ ἥβην. Greek is from Monro/Allen 1920. Servius also notes the Homeric intertext.

92 See n. 83.

93 Horsfall 1995, 215 comments: "The sense of righteousness implicit in 'indignant' seems [. . .] to give way to an element of plaint or protest ('non decet', if we turn to the word's origin!)." Cf. Molyviati-Toptsi 2000 and Conte 1986, 185–195 and 2007. Often, as in this case with the addition of *indignata*, Virgil reworks key elements in his allusions, an example of *oppositio in immitando* (see Giesecke 2000, 59–94).

94 Lucr. 3.1045–1046: *tu vero dubitabis et indignabere obire?* | *mortua cui vita est prope iam vivo atque videnti* ("Will you then hesitate and be *indignant* to meet your death, even though your life is already practically dead though you still live and can *see* [. . .])" The translation is my own. Erler 1997, 89 notes this teaching for Epicurus and Lucretius without linking it to the *Aeneid*: "Ep-

"The worst death [. . .] would be to die gripped by the terror of dying, clinging to life, and yet helpless before the power of the disease."[95] Like Hector (γοόωσα, *Il.* 22.363), Turnus groans (*cum gemitu*), but unlike him he remains *resentful*. He does not properly assess death or its consequences like those who exercise false reasoning in *De rerum natura*. Aeneas' judgment in the scene, however, is consistent with clearly observed phenomena. Galinsky is thus right to claim that "Aeneas' anger is anything but irrational."[96] It is a punitive act, not one of malice.[97] He makes his decision based on empirical proof and renders a correctly reasoned judgment about what the evidence requires. From an Epicurean perspective, Michael Putnam goes too far in claiming that "Aeneas' final anger against Turnus, aroused in a flash from a sudden vision which triggers a briskly executed killing, would not find support from the ethical dogmata of any ancient philosophical school, least of all the Stoics."[98] Turnus' past pleasure in his crimes is self-evident given the *monimenta* that he wears. For Aeneas, the baldric is a sort of objective correlative; the punishment is its necessary conclusion.

John Procopé sums up Philodemus' view of anger as having "a prophylactic function [. . .] it restrains the aggressor and discourages others from aggression (41.3–5). It would thus contribute to safety (ἀσφάλεια), a goal which Epicurus classes as a "natural good" (KD 7)."[99] By all of these measures, Aeneas' cognition is sound. His cognition is based strictly on sensory evidence, ἐνάργεια; his judgment and anger are likewise sound or, to use Philodemus' terminology, *natural* (κατὰ

icurus (*Men.* 123–124) and Lucretius (6.68–79) warn us that disquieting ideas are a punishment for those who do not reject what is unworthy and alien to the gods (*dis indigna putare alienaque pacis eorum*). In this case, superstition and unhappiness are the results (5.1161–1240)." This is clearly the case for Turnus.

95 Segal 1990, 19.

96 Galinsky 1988, 339. This reading lends credence to Segal's assessment 1990, 4: "[. . .] Virgil clearly understands that the central theme of the *De rerum natura* is the struggle against anxiety and particularly anxiety toward death."

97 Armstrong 1967, 155 is therefore correct to criticize the claims of Putnam 1964, xii: "Aeneas' killing of Turnus, which Putnam says, 'brings the poem to a violent and inconclusive end,' leaves an image of 'Aeneas' personal spite.' How is this true? Aeneas is expressly pictured as unwilling to kill Turnus merely from 'personal spite,' to avenge the trouble Turnus has caused him; it seems, indeed, to express the finest part of Aeneas' complex character that no such idea even occurs to him. His momentary fury over seeing Pallas' belt is the cause, and even then one feels (as Servius saw) that Aeneas' motive is not entirely personal. The real cry for revenge came from Evander in 11.176–179 (*ferte haec regi mandata*). Part of the pathos of this scene is that even Aeneas' anger for Pallas is not entirely his own, but also imposed on his weary shoulders as one more heavy responsibility."

98 Putnam 1990, 23. He is right about the Stoics.

99 Procopé 1993, 370. I have changed the formatting slightly.

φύσιν, 37). James Reed describes Virgil's hero as being "often a proxy for ourselves, seeing what we must see."[100] This is the case here, as through a focalizing gaze, Virgil encourages us to place the scene before our eyes and to assess the evidence for ourselves. Timothy O'Sullivan complains that Aeneas "only sees the baldric for its function within the plot, not for its engraved warning."[101] In contrast, I argue that by heeding any warning, he would be admitting false opinion into his reasoning, not simply taking the evidence for what it is – proof of Turnus' excess and the pain he has caused. Aeneas' vision is keen and accurate. Thus, he has a sure cognitive foundation for knowledge, judgment, and punishment, at least according to the Epicureans.

100 Reed 2007, 180.
101 O'Sullivan 2011, 476. Cf. Burnell 1987.

Erin M. Hanses

Chapter 3
A Woman's Pleasure: Sulpicia and the Epicurean Discourse on Love

> nec mulier semper ficto suspirat amore
> quae complexa viri corpus cum corpore iungit
> et tenet assuctis umectans oscula labris.
> nam facit ex animo saepe et communia quaerens
> gaudia sollicitat spatium decurrere amoris. (Lucr. 4.1192–1196)
>
> Nor does a woman always sigh with feigned love –
> she who has embraced the body of a man and joins it with hers
> and holds him, moistening his mouth and sucking his lips.
> You see she often does this from the heart and, seeking shared
> pleasures, incites him to run the course of love.[1]

The above passage from Lucretius's *De rerum natura* describes a woman seeking the pleasures of sexual intercourse with a man. This woman is defined by her actions – she holds her lover, kisses him, joins their bodies and does all this sincerely as she seeks shared pleasures.[2] The excerpt thus offers a rare view of a female agent in a work focused on leading the Roman man to Epicurean pleasure – the Roman male elite in general and Lucretius's addressee Memmius in particular.[3] Yet Lucretius does *not* present this pleasure-seeking woman as worthy of admiration, nor does he celebrate her active participation in the sexual act. Rather, she is an illustration of the powerful lure of desire and a demonstration of why people pursue passionate relationships even though they are painful and

1 My sincere thanks to the editors of this volume, and to the many readers of this paper through the years. All translations are my own (unless otherwise specified), as are any remaining errors.

2 On the inherent mutuality of this passage, see especially Brown 1987, 65-66 and Nussbaum 1989, 45. By contrast, Ovid's account of Tiresias experiencing the pleasures of both sexes (*Met*. 3.316–338) is fundamentally competitive.

3 For Lucretius's model reader as male, see Snyder 1976 and Nugent 1994. For the construction of Memmius as addressee, see Mitsis 1993 and Schiesaro 2007. Lucretius's portrayals of women are primarily limited to the diatribe and generally unflattering (e.g., Lucr. 4.1153–1170).

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distracting.[4] Nevertheless, this brief glimpse of women as partners in the pursuit of pleasure, as recipients of a reciprocal sexual enjoyment, contains a significant implication: if women, like men, can experience the downfalls and distractions of erotic love, then they too can benefit from Lucretius's Epicurean therapy. They too can attain philosophical pleasure – what Lucretius calls *voluptas*. Regardless of who his intended audience was, Lucretius here implies that women can be a part of the Epicurean discourse on love.[5] I will argue here that one particular woman, the elegist Sulpicia, chooses to embody Lucretius's pleasure-seeking woman in her poetry and in doing so offers an alternative to the Epicurean rejection of *amor*.

In fact, there is a rich if complicated tradition of women serving as partners in Epicurean philosophical discourse, brought to light by Pamela Gordon's work on female Epicureans.[6] Many of the women known to have been among Epicurus's adherents in the Garden and the Greek East are thought to have been prostitutes or ἑταῖραι. There is, however, no reason these women could not also be true participants in philosophical discourse, instead of or in addition to being sexual partners.[7] In Rome, there is further evidence for women as a part of the Epicurean milieu in the late Republic, in the writings of Lucretius's contemporary Philodemus. In his *De libertate dicendi*, Philodemus includes a passage on different strategies for teaching men and women and describes the typical reactions of female students to certain types of Epicurean "frank criticism" or παρρησία.[8] Lucretius, then, by portraying a female agent in his poem (albeit in a negative light), is participating in an enduring tradition of including women as players in Epicurean philosophical discourse. His sexual woman represents the shared culpability in the kind of obsessive attachment he disdains – the erotic attachment that disturbs the mind's ἀταραξία.[9] By necessity,

4 See in particular Morel 2019 on Lucretius's promotion of free love as an alternative to the erotic attachment depicted in scenes like this one – an attachment which Morel sees as containing, for Lucretius, the same pathological symptoms as political desires.

5 Such a notion is not inconsistent with Epicurus's "universal call" to practice philosophy, recorded in his letter to Herodotus (DL 10.35–83).

6 See Gordon 2012, 72–108. See also Clay 2009, 26–27.

7 See Gordon 2012, 100, which reflects on the argument of Snyder 1989, 102–105.

8 Coll. 6a.1–8; 22a.1–11; 22b.1–16. See Konstan *et al*. 1998, 100–101, 124–125. For analysis, see Castner 1982 and Gordon 2012, 101. *De libertate dicendi* is likely Philodemus's record of the teachings of Zeno of Sidon, which implies the continuous presence of women in the Garden through Philodemus's time (see Sedley 2009, 32–36).

9 Note in contrast how, at the close of Books 4 and 5, Lucretius offers the potential benefits of marriage – that is, of partnership between men and women – as a healthier alternative to care-inducing attachment. For discussion, see Nussbaum 1989, 14–16, 25, 47–48 as well as Gigandet 2003.

then, she represents the other half of the Epicurean conversation – the female half, silent in Lucretius's own text, but present in the culture of late Republican Rome.[10]

In this chapter, I argue that there was indeed a woman writing in Rome after the time of Lucretius[11] who recognized the tacit message in his image of female pleasure seeking. Sulpicia, the only extant female love elegist, makes pointed reference to this precise passage in her poetry. Engaging particularly with Lucretius's diction and broadly with the tenets of Epicureanism, she inserts herself into Lucretius's Epicurean discourse on love, both as another pleasure-seeking woman and as a fellow thinker. While the male love elegists more typically depicted frustrations with their *puellae* and with the various rivals for their women's affections,[12] Sulpicia throughout her brief poetic corpus promotes the mutuality of pleasure between men and women – implied by the Lucretian *communia gaudia* in the above passage and represented shortly thereafter by the phrase *mutua voluptas* (4.1201). In engaging with an episode in which a woman has agency, Sulpicia seizes an opportunity to become a partner in Epicurean philosophical discourse, to counter Lucretius's claims that erotic attachment can be damaging and to promote mutuality as her own solution to the cares attendant on erotic love.

What reinforces this argument is the fact that Lucretius was not the only Epicurean with whom Sulpicia engaged; her relationship with her beloved Cerinthus echoes that of Philodemus with his lover Xanthippe. An Epicurean with a substantial following in the Bay of Naples, Philodemus authored both philosophical prose treatises and a number of Greek epigrams treating erotic themes. In these epigrams, Xanthippe serves both as a precursor to the elegiac *puella* and a female partner in philosophical discourse.[13] Sulpicia in her elegies plays on this relationship between narrator and beloved in Philodemus, in a way that emphasizes both her gender and poetic identity. She finds in Philodemus's poetry the idea of shared pleasure – what Lucretius labeled *mutua voluptas* in the sexual sense – embodied specifically in the sense of mutual *philosophical* pleasure. In her learned love elegy, Sulpicia recalls both meanings of the phrase.

In this contribution, then, I look broadly at the narrative voice that Sulpicia represents in *Corpus Tibullianum* Book 3. Accordingly, when I refer to Sulpicia throughout, I mean the persona that maintains a presence in 3.8–18 and not nec-

10 For Epicureanism among the Roman elite during this time, see, e.g., Benferhat 2005.

11 Though we cannot with certainty state when Sulpicia composed her elegies, or even who precisely she was, the scholarly *communis opinio* is that she wrote contemporaneously with the Augustan elegists. For the debate, see n. 14 below.

12 See, e.g., James 2003, 35–70.

13 See Sider 1987, 317–323.

essarily the author of any or all of those poems.[14] I begin by analyzing the ways in which Sulpicia cites and adapts the above Lucretian episode on a woman's pleasure in order to insert herself into a learned discourse with the Epicurean. I then consider Sulpicia's engagement with Philodemus, particularly in the metapoetic styling of her relationship with her beloved Cerinthus. I conclude by showing how Sulpicia embodies *mutua voluptas* – both the shared sexual pleasure Lucretius describes, and the shared philosophical pleasure Philodemus evokes. I ultimately aim to demonstrate that Sulpicia firmly denies the Epicurean position that erotic love is to be avoided and, by promoting mutual pleasure as her own philosophical alternative to Epicurean doctrine, makes a place for herself as the female Roman voice in the Epicurean discourse on love.

Sulpicia and Lucretius

Lucretius's description of a woman who seeks mutual pleasure appears in the lengthy sexual digression in Book 4 of his *De rerum natura* (1030–1287). This digression has been the subject of much scholarly commentary,[15] but the verses dealing specifically with a woman's sexual pleasure (1192–1196) have been less frequently addressed.[16] Lucretius certainly did not prioritize a female point of view, and yet it is notable that he not only touches on the subject of a woman's sexual pleasure, but even elaborates on it at some length. The passage has no model in the body of gynecological treatises predating Lucretius's poem. Those texts, in fact, have even less to say than Lucretius on the subject of female pleasure. With the exception of scattered implications in Soranus[17] and brief sugges-

14 Although poems 3.8–18 feature Sulpicia and Cerinthus, only poems 3.13–18 are traditionally considered Sulpician (for full discussion, see Fulkerson 2017, 25–46). Poems 3.8–12 are considered part of Sulpicia's Garland, composed either by an *amicus Sulpiciae* (Fredericks 1976; Hinds 1987) or someone else entirely (Holzberg 1999; Hubbard 2004). For Sulpicia as author of all poems 3.8–18, see Hallett 2002. For broad consideration of the *amicus* poems and their interactions with the traditional Sulpician corpus, see Lowe 1988; Milnor 2002. For additional reviews of the critical tradition of Sulpicia, see Keith 2006 and Skoie 2012.

15 Betensky 1980; Fitzgerald 1984; Brown 1987; Nussbaum 1989; Nugent 1994; Gordon 2002; Gigandet 2003; Morel 2019. In particular, Caston 2006 and 2012, 22–48 argues that there is a clear elegiac response to philosophical depictions of love, including to Lucretius's diatribe, though she does not include a discussion of Sulpicia.

16 Brown 1987, 65–67; Nussbaum 1989, 33, 45–46; Jacobson 1990; Allen 1991; Nugent 1994, 198–199; Giovacchini 2021.

17 *Gyn.* 1.9.22–27, 1.9.38–45, 1.12.51–55 (Burguière *et al.* 2003).

tions in the Hippocratic corpus,[18] the Aristotelian *Historia animalium*[19] and the writings of Galen,[20] women's sexual pleasure is hardly acknowledged. Even Celsus, who wrote just after Lucretius, is silent on the subject. Lucretius, it seems, had a specific and non-scientific goal in including this passage, namely, to illustrate why both women and men find themselves ensnared in the bonds of love. He follows the brief episode with a parallel description from the animal world (1197–1208), reinforcing the mutual pleasure of female and male alike. What he creates, then, is not a clinical description of a woman's pleasure, but rather a persuasive, poetic image of love's mutually destructive power.

Though the mutuality of pleasure between men and women that this passage embodies is generally not questioned, the *De rerum natura* itself is not a text known for showing women agency. S. Georgia Nugent has observed of Lucretius's poem in general that, "the human soul – indeed the human mind to which the poem is addressed – turns out to be the possession solely of male readers. The female is not imagined as a potential convert; in fact, she is never represented in the poem as capable of thought."[21] Yet a woman who "sighs with love" (*suspirat amore*, 1192) – whether that love is "feigned" (*ficto*, 1192) or not – is clearly capable of thinking, feeling and expressing her pleasure. In addition, Lucretius makes the woman in this passage the subject of each active verb (*iungit*, 1193; *tenet*, 1194; *facit ex animo*, 1195; *quaerens | gaudia*, 1195–1196). This is, as I read it, one of the few instances of female agency in the whole of the *De rerum natura*. We must, therefore, pay close attention.

The first verb in this passage to give the woman agency is *suspirat*, in the phrase *suspirat amore* (1192). The specific combination of *suspiro* and *amor* does not occur in extant Latin literature before Lucretius; it is a novel expression, unique in the *De rerum natura* and defined by its sexual context. What is more, the phrase's meaning is further narrowed in that it is specifically a woman who is enjoying sex as she "sighs with love." The Lucretian turn of phrase in this precise sense apparently resonated with the elegiac authors Tibullus and Sulpicia. Tibullus 1.6 contains nearly the same expression (*amore* has become *amores*, with "loves" as the objects to be sighed over), in the same metrical position (35–36): *te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores | et simulat subito condoluisse caput* ("She holds you, she sighs for other loves who are absent and all of a sudden she pretends she has a headache"). While Tibullus here is not describing a woman who is enjoying sex with her current lover, he *is* describing a woman. He maintains the

18 *Genit.* 4. For discussion see Dean-Jones 1992 and 1994, 153–160.

19 *Hist. an.* 10 *passim.* For discussion, see Dean-Jones 1994, 153–160.

20 *Nat. Fac.* 3.3. For the story of Galen and the widow, and an argument against that episode as a depiction of women's sexual pleasure, see King 2011.

21 Nugent 1994, 179.

original context of the Lucretian phrase – a woman involved in an act of sexual desire and passion – but uses the phrase to serve his own elegiac purposes, that is, to describe a woman of changeable affections. In the process, he ironically modifies Lucretius's phrase to describe a *puella* who is, precisely, *not* enjoying the act of having sex with her current partner but longing for somebody else.

Sulpicia likewise alludes to the Lucretian phrase in poem 3.11 of the *Corpus Tibullianum*,[22] and she, too, pointedly manipulates its meaning. While celebrating her lover Cerinthus's birthday, she expresses concern that *he* "sighs for other loves" (5–16):

uror ego ante alias: iuvat hoc, Cerinthe, quod uror,
si tibi de nobis mutuus ignis adest.
mutuus adsit amor, per te dulcissima furta
perque tuos oculos per Geniumque rogo.
Mane Geni, cape tura libens votisque faveto,
si modo, cum de me cogitat, ille calet.
quod si forte alios iam nunc suspirat amores,
tunc precor infidos, sancte, relinque focos.
nec tu sis iniusta, Venus: vel serviat aeque
vinctus uterque tibi vel mea vincla leva.
sed potius valida teneamur uterque catena,
nulla queat posthac quam soluisse dies.

I burn beyond the other girls: and I enjoy that I burn, Cerinthus,
if a mutual fire appears in your heart on my account.
Let there be a mutual love – I ask for sweetest trysts
by you, by your eyes, and by your Genius deity.
Genius shade, take up the incense willingly, and favor my prayers,
if only, when he thinks about me, he will be inflamed.
But if by chance he now sighs for other loves,
then I pray, sacred one, abandon the unfaithful hearths.
And may you not be unreasonable, Venus: either let us serve you equally,
each of us bound, or loosen my chains.
But rather let each of us be held by a strong chain,
which no day after is able to loosen.

In making Cerinthus the subject, Sulpicia gives us the reverse of Lucretius's woman who is experiencing pleasure and of Tibullus's woman desiring another man. She imagines a man desiring another woman, reversing the genders and thereby drawing attention to her own.

It may be tempting to see the phrase *suspirat amores* in Sulpicia not as a reference to Lucretius, but merely as a nod to Tibullus 1.6 (particularly since Tibullus and Sulpicia both use the form *amores* in place of Lucretius's *amore*). However, the

22 3.11 is one of the two *amicus* poems narrated by the female persona Sulpicia, along with 3.9.

echoes of Lucretius in poem 3.11 extend beyond just this phrase. One such echo is the narrator's appeal to Venus (13–16), which immediately follows *suspirat amores*. In her direct address to the goddess, Sulpicia evokes Lucretius's address to Venus in the opening lines of his poem and the subsequent erotic scene between Venus and Mars, which prefigures Lucretius's treatment of sex in Book 4.[23] Additionally, Sulpicia spends the majority of poem 3.11 begging Venus for "mutual fire" (*mutuus ignis*, 6), "mutual love" (*mutuus amor*, 7) and shared bondage in a strong chain (*valida teneamur uterque catena*, 16). These prayers have the ring of *communia gaudia*, the "shared pleasures" that Lucretius's passionate woman seeks.[24] But they also allude more directly to another passage by Lucretius – one immediately following his description of the pleasure-seeking woman (4.1201–1208):

nonne vides etiam quos mutua saepe voluptas
vinxit, ut in vinclis communibus excrucientur,
in triviis cum saepe canes, discedere aventes
diversi cupide summis ex viribus tendunt,
quom interea validis Veneris compagibus haerent! 1205
quod facerent numquam, nisi mutua gaudia nossent
quae iacere in fraudem possent vinctosque tenere.
quare etiam atque etiam, ut dico, est communis voluptas.

Do you not also see those whom mutual pleasure has often bound,
such that they are tortured in shared chains,
as when dogs in the crossroads often, desiring to get away,
strain eagerly in opposite directions with all their strength,
while meanwhile they cling in the strong bonds of Venus!
They would never do this, unless they knew mutual pleasures,
which can throw them into self-deceit and hold them bound.
Thus, as I say again and again, there is shared pleasure.

We see here the array of diction concerning mutual pleasure (*mutua voluptas*, 1201; *communis voluptas*, 1208) and shared chains (*vinclis communibus*, 1202), which Sulpicia echoes in 3.11, coincident with her Lucretian citation. Her specific plea to Venus, "but rather let each of us be held by a strong chain" (*sed potius*

23 The strong connection between the sexually charged Mars-Venus scene and the sexual digression in Book 4 has been observed by Hardie 1986, 163 and O'Hara 2007, 164–165. For the sexual nature of the Mars-Venus scene as an important influence for the elegists, see O'Rourke 2014, 3 as well as his n. 13 for female supremacy in the elegiac tradition of *militia amoris* as a Roman invention (not a Hellenistic antecedent).

24 It is initially in Lucretius that *gaudia* take on a sexual connotation, that is, where *gaudia* are an expression of sexual *voluptas*. This is the primary meaning of *gaudia* later employed by the love elegists (see n. 62 for earlier instances of *gaudia* in Latin literature).

valida teneamur uterque catena, 16), expresses the typically elegiac *servitium amoris* in a Lucretian image of mutual pleasure. *Servitium amoris* – the elegiac trope of the lover as metaphorically enslaved by the beloved – is usually spoken of as the property of elegy, unique to that genre.[25] Yet the very language of lovers in chains is prefigured here in the *De rerum natura* and Sulpicia's reference to this scene is noteworthy: she promotes the idea – uncommon even in elegiac works – that love, when shared, can be pleasurable.[26]

For Lucretius, the obsession inherent in lovers' figurative enslavement is antithetical to the Epicurean ideal of ἀταραξία. His description of a "mutual pleasure," *mutua voluptas* (1201), is merely an explanation of *why* humans and animals submit themselves to the chains of Venus; it is in no way a recommendation. Sulpicia, too, acknowledges the pain of desire – she burns for Cerinthus (*uror*, 5). Where Lucretius rejects even mutual pleasure as disruptive of ἀταραξία, however, Sulpicia considers mutuality the solution. She prays to Venus that she and Cerinthus both be bound beneath the goddess's chains, or that she at least be freed from her desire (13–14). She recognizes that these are her two options for happiness – the latter a Lucretian one, and the former her own philosophical assertion (15–16). Her pleadings for a *mutuus ignis* and a *mutuus amor* already ring with the sound of the Lucretian *mutua voluptas* and the *communia gaudia* that his passionate woman seeks. Paired with an almost direct Lucretian quotation in the words *suspirat amores*, these echoes of mutual passion, the imagery of lovers in strong chains, and their framing in a hymn to Venus all lend to this passage an undeniably Lucretian timbre.

Notably, this same image of lovers in chains also appears in the next poem 3.12 (1–8):

> Natalis Iuno, sanctos cape turis acervos,
> quos tibi dat tenera docta puella manu.
> tota tibi est hodie, tibi se laetissima compsit,
> staret ut ante tuos conspicienda focos.
> illa quidem ornandi causas tibi, diva, relegat: 5

25 James 2003, 145 citing Copley 1947, 291, who notes the absence of the specific language of lovers in chains from earlier Latin literature – even from the plays of Plautus and Terence, whose characters frequently embodied *servitium amoris*, even if they did not self-consciously comment upon it. Though Copley's study remains an important analysis of *servitium amoris* as elegiac motif, he does not discuss language of lovers' enslavement in Lucretius when detailing this trope's predecessors.

26 See Cortés Tovar 2012, 255–257 for Sulpicia's reframing of *servitium amoris* in words of mutuality as a gendered subversion of the elegiac norm ("Igual que los poetas elegíacos renuncian a los valores viriles cívicos y militares por el amor, ella renuncia a los femeninos," 256).

est tamen, occulte cui placuisse velit.
at tu, sancta, fave, neu quis divellat amantes,
sed iuveni quaeso mutua vincla para.

Juno Natalis, receive the holy heaps of incense,
which a learned girl offers you with her tender hand.
Today she is entirely yours, and she has adorned herself most merrily for you,
so that she may stand before your flames as a girl worthy to be seen.
She attributes the reason of her dress to you, goddess:
though there is someone she secretly wishes to please.
But you, holy one, be favorable, and let no one tear apart the lovers,
but please prepare shared chains for the young man.

This poem celebrates the birthday of a *docta puella*, presumably Sulpicia, and is for that reason the companion poem to the one before it, 3.11, which treats Cerinthus's birthday. It is no coincidence, then, that these poems both highlight the trope of *servitium amoris* and promote mutual passion. In 3.11, we are introduced to the idea of lovers in "chains" (*vincla*, 14), with their shared servitude representing the lovers' "mutual passion" (*mutuus ignis*, 6; *mutuus amor*, 7). In 3.12, we see a reiteration of this image in the phrase "shared chains" (*mutua vincla*, 8). This is the same poem in which Sulpicia is called a *docta puella*, a "learned girl,"[27] drawing attention to the learned allusivity in her poetry. Here, Sulpicia highlights her erudition by choosing to engage with Lucretius's portrayal of female agency and mutual pleasure to assert her own gender and her own identity as a sexual agent. By responding to Lucretius, she in a way claims the woman's place in Epicurean discourse that was present from its inception. Yet her sentiments are ultimately anti-Epicurean; in using Lucretius's own diction to present mutual pleasure as an effective solution to the tension between ἀταραξία and *amor*, she in the end offers a rival to the Epicurean's philosophical principles and a challenge to his lessons on love.

27 Here I find most convincing the reading of Hallett 2002, who argues that 3.12 is narrated by the authorial persona Sulpicia in the third person. For the contrary view, see Hinds 1987, who does not see Sulpicia as the narrator but imagines instead an "interested third party" (29). Though it is more impactful if Sulpicia self-identifies as *docta puella*, my argument of a nod to the poem's allusiveness remains unaffected if it is an *amicus Sulpiciae* who labels this *puella* as "learned." For the *docta puella* as a standard feature in elegy, see James 2003, 36–41; 219–220.

Sulpicia and Philodemus

As I have claimed above, Sulpicia pushes back against Lucretius's amatory advice through exploiting a passage in the *De rerum natura* that undermines the Epicurean's own argument. I now contend that she finds further fodder for her challenge in the poetry of Lucretius's Epicurean contemporary Philodemus – though, this time, in the poet's own, self-conscious exploration of the anxiety inherent in erotic love. While Philodemus's Epicureanism is expressed mainly through his philosophical prose treatises, the poetic epigrams he composed also contain considerations of Epicurean principles and are known to have inspired the poetry of Augustan Rome.[28] Sulpicia engages with both of these Epicurean tenets more generally and the specific version of the paradigm of narrator and beloved presented in the epigrams as she works to further acknowledge the woman's part in the Epicurean discourse on love.

Many lovers feature throughout Philodemus' poetry, though the one figured most frequently is Xanthippe.[29] Variously called Xanthippe, Xantho and the diminutive Xantharion, she represents a central love interest in Philodemus's epigrams and has accordingly been regarded as a precursor to the *puellae* of Roman love elegy.[30] But unlike these elegiac *puellae*, Xanthippe holds a uniquely Epicurean place in Philodemus' poetry: she is both a lover and, as I hope to show, a fellow philosopher. That Xanthippe is the conjugal partner of a philosopher is reinforced by her given poetic name – the same as the wife of Socrates.[31] Yet her relationship with Philodemus appears to go beyond the erotic as she offers reinforcements and even corrections to Philodemus's Epicurean doctrine. The most intriguing instance of this is in an epigram which David Sider posits is a dialogue between the authorial persona and Xanthippe (*A.P.* 9.570 = Sider 3):[32]

––Ξανθὼ κηρόπλαστε μυρόχροε μουσοπρόσωπε,
εὔλαλε, διπτερύγων καλὸν ἄγαλμα Πόθων,
ψῆλόν μοι χερσὶ δροσιναῖς μύρον· ἐν μονοκλίνῳ
δεῖ με λιθοδνήτῳ δεῖ ποτε πετριδίῳ

28 See Tait 1941; Obbink 1995; Armstrong *et al.* 2004. For both the characteristics of and inherent contradictions in Epicurean poetry, see Asmis 1995a.

29 See Sider 1987, 310 as well as 316 and addendum on the variations of Xanthippe's name. Most famously among Philodemus's lovers, there are four different women named "Demo," spawning the poet's play on his own name, "Philo-demos" (*A.P.* 5.115 = Sider 10).

30 Sider 1987, 310 and n. 3.

31 Philodemus also addresses her as wife (ὦ φιλεράστρι' and ἄκοιτις, *A.P.* 5.4 = Sider 7).

32 Philodemus has another epigram that can be read in this same way – as a dialogue with a second speaker, who provides reinforcement of Epicurean principles (*A.P.* 9.412 = Sider 29).

εὕδειν ἀθανάτως πουλὺν χρόνον. ᾇδε πάλιν μοι,
Ξανθάριον, ναὶ ναὶ τὸ γλυκὺ τοῦτο μέλος.
––οὐκ ἀίεις, ὤνθρωφ' ὁ τοκογλύφος; ἐν μονοκλίνῳ
δεῖ σε βιοῦν αἰεί, δύσμορφε, πετριδίῳ.

<*Man.*> Xantho – formed of wax, with skin smelling of perfume, with the face of a Muse, with splendid voice, a beautiful image of the double-winged Pothoi –
pluck for me with your delicate hands a fragrant song: "In a solitary rocky bed made of stone I must surely someday
sleep a deathlessly long time." Yes, yes, Xantharion,
sing again for me this sweet song.
<*Xantho.*> Don't you understand, man, you accountant you? You must live forever, you wretch, in a solitary rocky bed! (Translation: Sider 1997, 68)

Here Xantho plucks a song for the narrator (likely the poetic persona of Philodemus, as I will assume here), though not the one he wants to hear. Where he had proposed to sleep a "deathlessly long time," Xanthippe mockingly emphasizes that one cannot be dead "deathlessly" (ἀθανάτως, 5) – especially true among Epicureans, who advise against fearing death and desiring remembrance after it. She instead highlights the physical matter of the grave in which he will lie (πετριδίῳ, 8) and delivers back the words "live forever" (βιοῦν αἰεί, 8) as a sarcastic retort to his original sentiments.[33] Philodemus's initial call to Xanthippe to sing for him a song about Epicurean principles acknowledges her role as a partner in this discourse, in addition to the position of lover that she holds throughout his epigrams. Her response here confirms her position as philosophical equal.

Notably, Philodemus calls Xanthippe κηρόπλαστε, "formed of wax" (1). This adjective suggests a metapoetic play on the wax tablet in which the beloved becomes literal poetic material. The metapoetry contained in the epithet κηρόπλαστε is echoed in Sulpicia's name for her beloved: Cerinthus. As David Roessel has argued, the name Cerinthus comes from the Greek κήρινθος or "bee-bread," a substance that has associations with honey and, importantly, with wax (κηρός in Greek; *cera* in Latin).[34] Like Philodemus, Sulpicia too has a beloved "formed of wax," a point she plays on in poem 3.13 where she describes wax tablets that contain a love letter to Cerinthus (21–30):

tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudori
quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.

33 For the argument, see Sider 1997, 68–72.

34 Roessel 1990, 243. This metapoetic reading of κηρόπλαστε is my own; Sider 1997, 69 offers parallels in Hor. *Carm.* 1.13.2 and Plin. *HN* 37.33 where the adjective *cereus* refers to the color of a woman's skin, and in Pl. *Ti.* 74c, where κηρόπλαστος refers to a doll.

exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.
exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret,
dicetur si quis non habuisse sua.
non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
ne legat id nemo quam meus ante, velim,
sed peccasse iuvat, vultus componere famae
taedet: cum digno digna fuisse ferar.

At last love has come, such a love that I would have more
notoriety if I covered it up than if I revealed it to anyone.
Begged by my muses, Cytherean Venus brought him
and put him down him in my lap.
Venus has fulfilled her promises: let anybody tell of my pleasures,
if they[35] will be said not to have had their own.
Nor would I want to entrust anything to sealed tablets,
lest no one read it before my lover does,
but I enjoy having sinned – to construct the appearance of reputation
is tiresome: let me be said to have been worthy with a worthy subject.

As this poem centers on a letter, it is worth mentioning the significance of letter writing among practitioners of Epicurean philosophy, including those in the Roman world.[36] We know that letters played a large role in Epicurus's communication with his followers, evidenced by the fact that most of his surviving philosophical treatises are in epistolary form. Accordingly, the findings at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum reveal a tradition of mutual citation and quotation, suggesting that intellectual exchanges happened in writing and in a format akin to the letter. Letters among Epicureans were also convenient fodder for anti-Epicurean discourse. Alciphron's *Epistulae* includes a satirical epistle from a well-known Epicurean woman, Leontion, thought to have been a ἑταίρα. She writes to another ἑταίρα, Lamia, and complains that the "socratizing" Epicurus keeps pestering her with letters and wants to make her his Xanthippe.[37] This parody highlights the frequent epistolary correspondence between Epicurus and his women followers, extant in fragments of letters Epicurus wrote to both Leontion and Themista.[38] Yet it is precisely the personal nature of the epistolary form that makes Epicurus's letters stylistically attractive. They offer a particular brand of voyeur-

35 I use the singular "they" here because the gender of Sulpicia's intended readership is not specified; both men and women can read and learn from her experience. See Batstone 2018, 92 for the complexities inherent in Sulpicia's choice not to gender her readership.
36 For a full discussion of Epicurean letter writing, see Gordon 2012, 80–88. See also Erbì 2015.
37 4.17.3. For discussion, see Gordon 2012, 80–81.
38 Clay 1998, 247; Gordon 2012, 83.

ism that sees a third party reading someone else's personal thoughts. This feeling of intrusion on a private moment is often intentionally created, especially in fictional, literary letters intended for public consumption (e.g., Ovid's *Heroides*). These letters lure a reader into feeling part of an inner circle or privy to private and potentially damning knowledge. This is the kind of feature that Epicurus exploits in the service of philosophical discourse and that Alciphron employs in his literary parodies. Sulpicia likewise opens her correspondence to others in poem 3.13 when she frankly discusses the repercussions of sealing or not sealing her tablets – metapoetically, her affair with Cerinthus.

The metapoetic plane on which this affair operates has a great deal to do with Cerinthus's name. Other elegists send missives to their beloveds and sometimes even their own poetry, inscribed on wax tablets. But Sulpicia conflates lover and letter in writing on a wax tablet to a man whose name has waxen associations. As Roessel puts it, she "writes on her lover, both figuratively and literally."[39] In doing so, Sulpicia also creates a play on the elegiac trope in which the beloved exists as the content for poetry – in which, for example, Propertius's Cynthia is not a flesh-and-blood woman but exists primarily in the verses of her *amator*, as a literary construct.[40] In a reversal of the standard gender dynamics of elegy, Sulpicia's male beloved Cerinthus becomes the figurative material for her composition, like the typical elegiac *puella.* Yet Sulpicia goes further and makes him the literal medium that contains her elegies as well. He is doubly formed of wax.[41]

In having his own waxen lover, Xanthippe, sing a part of his poem, Philodemus encodes her identity into his verses. In fact, in another epigram, he goes beyond merely envisioning Xanthippe as the material for his epigrams: he inscribes himself into his poetry as well (*A.P.* 11.41 = Sider 4):

ἑπτὰ τριηκόντεσσιν ἐπέρχονται λυκάβαντες,
ἤδη μοι βιότου σχιζόμεναι σελίδες·
ἤδη καὶ λευκαί με κατασπείρουσιν ἔθειραι,
Ξανθίππη, συνετῆς ἄγγελοι ἡλικίης,
ἀλλ' ἔτι μοι ψαλμός τε λάλος κῶμοί τε μέλονται
καὶ πῦρ ἀπλήστῳ τύφετ' ἐνὶ κραδίῃ·
αὐτὴν ἀλλὰ τάχιστα κορωνίδα γράψατε, Μοῦσαι,
ταύτης ἡμετέρης, δεσπότιδες, μανίης.

39 Roessel 1990, 247. See also Hallett 2006, 40–42 and 2011, 299.

40 See esp. Wyke 1987. See also Greene 1995 and 1998, 37–66.

41 For the freedom inherent in consigning Cerinthus to a textual sphere, see Keith 1997.

Seven years are coming up on thirty;
papyrus columns of my life now being torn off;
now too, Xanthippe, white hairs besprinkle me,
announcing the age of intelligence;
but the harp's voice and revels are still a concern to me,
and a fire smolders in my insatiable heart.
Inscribe her immediately as the *koronis*, Mistress Muses,
of this madness. (Translation: Sider 1997, 73)

On this occasion of his thirty-seventh birthday,[42] Philodemus reflects on his mortality, equating his existence with his poems when he writes "papyrus columns of my life now being torn off." He associates age with gaining wisdom and with moving away from music and revelry,[43] even as he laments his continued care for poetry – a mode of writing Epicurus himself disdained.[44] In order to end this "madness" (μανίης, 8), the narrator asks the Muses to make Xanthippe a κορωνίς, a "final flourish" for his poetic furor (κορωνίδα, 7). Grammatically, αὐτήν (7) could merely be emphasizing κορωνίδα. If αὐτήν points to Xanthippe herself, however, implying that Xanthippe can help Philodemus by acting as his partner in their pursuit of Epicurean virtues, this makes more enticing the prospect of Xanthippe as poetic "final flourish" and the epigram as demonstrating her transition from material for poetic inspiration to philosophical equal.[45] Such a characterization of Xanthippe suggests that Philodemus sees her both as his last subject for poetic celebration and as the philosophical partner who can return him to reason. By speaking of both himself and his beloved as the poetry he is writing, he equalizes them and joins them together in the material for his compositions.

Sulpicia is similarly metapoetic in her poem 3.13 above, especially if we consider an alternate version of lines 7–8. In this case, she envisions not only Cerinthus, but also her own poetic persona as living within the wax on which she writes (7–8): *non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis*, | *me legat ut nemo quam meus ante, velim* ("Nor would I want to entrust anything to sealed tablets,

42 This was the age at which Aristotle said men should marry (*Pol.* 1335a29). See Sider 1997, 73–74 for discussion.

43 Cf. *A.P.* 5.112 = Sider 5; *A.P.* 11.34 = Sider 6.

44 The notion comes in part from Epicurus's injunction in a letter to Pythocles of Lampsacus, telling him to, "hoist sail and flee, my friend, all traditional education" (παιδείαν δὲ πᾶσαν, μακάριε, φεῦγε τἀκάτιον ἀράμενος, DL 10.6). For discussion, see Gale 1994, 14–18, Asmis 1995a and Clay 2004, 25–27. Volk 2002, 94–95 and n. 72 provides further sources on and discussion of Epicurus's views on poetry.

45 This reading of Xanthippe in this epigram has been suggested by Giangrande 1973, 143–147 and supported by Sider 1987, 315–316 and 1997, 77.

so that no one read me before my lover").[46] If we read *me* here with the manuscript, and *ut* as emended from *id*, we reveal a narrator who sees herself contained in her own poem.[47] Cerinthus, as her waxen lover, both receives her letter and is the letter – they are joined in wax and in Sulpicia's words. As in Philodemus's epigram, narrator and beloved here are equalized, put on the same metapoetic plane. Their relationship thus reveals the standards of the elegiac genre, in which (both) lovers exist mainly as the material for poetry. Yet it also underlines Sulpicia's emphasis on the pleasure one can experience when love is mutual, a suggestion that rivals the Epicurean dissuasion from erotic attachment. Sulpicia, by alluding to Philodemus's own *scripta puella*, points out to her readership that even Epicureans can derive pleasure when men and women are philosophical (if not erotic) equals. Philodemus's Xanthippe exists in wax, but he implies that she is more – a wife, a partner, a force for reason. Sulpicia, as a female elegist in her own right, embodies this role of a woman in philosophical discourse with men and promotes pleasure both philosophical *and* erotic in her love affair with Cerinthus. Yet she keeps her poetic persona connected to the wax – reinforcing the literary level at which these discourses take place and highlighting the fact that her learned engagement with these Epicurean philosophers can only be acknowledged if others read *her* – that is, her poetry.

Sulpicia and *mutua voluptas*

In each of the ways Sulpicia interacts with these two Epicurean authors in her poetry, she continues to highlight the notion of *mutua voluptas*, the "mutual pleasure" that one can share both sexually and philosophically with a partner. For the Epicureans, this pleasure is hampered by the anxiety attendant upon erotic attachment – an anxiety that manifests itself in elegy as the *cura* poets feel for their beloveds. In Sulpicia, however, *cura* is not an obstruction to love, provided that the care is mutual. We can see an example of this Sulpician notion in poem 3.17, in which Sulpicia is sick (perhaps with a love sickness, as is common in elegy) and only wants to get well if Cerinthus wants the same – that is, if he loves her too (1–6):

46 For full critical apparatus, see Luck 1998.

47 Cf. Milnor 2002, 261. For a discussion of Sulpicia revealing her *fama* in terms of undressing herself, see Flaschenreim 1999.

estne tibi, Cerinthe, tuae pia cura puellae
quod mea nunc vexat corpora fessa calor?
a ego non aliter tristes evincere morbos
optarim, quam te si quoque velle putem.
at mihi quid prosit morbos evincere, si tu
nostra potes lento pectore ferre mala?

Cerinthus, do you feel an affectionate anxiety for your girl
because a fever now wracks my worn-out body?
Ah! I would not otherwise want to recover from my dismal sickness
unless I should think that you want this too.
But what good is it for me to recover, if you
can bear my ills with an indifferent heart?

In these verses, Sulpicia provides the reverse of the elegiac play on lovesickness and love as a sickness; it is typically the girlfriend of the poetic *amator* who is ill, but here Sulpicia speaks of her own *tristes morbi* (3), highlighting her gender in doing so. Significantly, Sulpicia asks Cerinthus whether he has *cura*, "anxiety," for her in her illness. Though *cura* ultimately becomes a standard word for the anxiety of the elegiac lover, it has important roots in Lucretius's Epicurean therapy, and in his definition of love (4.1058–1060):

hinc autemst nomen amoris,
hinc illaec primum Veneris *dulcedinis* in cor
stillavit gutta et successit frigida cura.

from here moreover comes the name for love,
from here it was that the first drop of Venus's sweetness
dripped into the heart and frigid anxiety followed.

Here and throughout the *De rerum natura*, *cura* is the stand-in for all that must be removed from life to attain ἀταραξία, including erotic attachments. Other elegists use this very word *cura* to push back against the Epicurean rejection of erotic love – a rejection founded on the notion that attachment to one's lover causes anxiety.[48] Most relevant is Ovid, who throughout his amatory poems subverts Epicurean values while, especially in the *Ars amatoria*, promoting female pleasure.[49] In 3.17, Sulpicia similarly pushes back against Lucretius's rejection of

48 See, e.g., Fabre-Serris 2018, 37, who traces themes of medical treatment for love through Lucretius, Gallus, Vergil and Propertius; and Fabre-Serris 2014, 14 with n. 34 on the meaning of *cura* in elegy. See also Hanses 2022, 95–96.

49 Ovid promotes a woman's pleasure at *Ars am.* 2.681–692, 717–730. See O'Rourke 2014, 20–25 for Ovid's subversion of Lucretius in these specific passages. Lévy 2007 argues generally for Ovid

erotic attachment by questioning Cerinthus about his own indifference and challenging him, as though he were an Epicurean.[50]

This challenge first manifests when Sulpicia asks Cerinthus if he has *pia cura*, "an affectionate anxiety," for her (1). She implies in both this opening question and her closing couplet that Cerinthus is less emotionally invested in their relationship than she is. When she points out that Cerinthus has an "indifferent heart" when it comes to bearing her "ills" (*si tu | nostra potes lento pectore ferre mala*, 5–6), she uses for "ills" the standard term in Lucretius for what results from too much anxiety: *mala.*[51] If we read Sulpicia's illness, then, as a physical manifestation of the *mala* that result from too much *cura* in love, poem 3.17 shows her trying to persuade Cerinthus away from, not just an erotic indifference, but an Epicurean one. Accordingly, Sulpicia's point that her "ills" will only go away if Cerinthus shows her the same affection – that is, if their love is mutual – further emphasizes her view that mutuality is a potential solution to the Epicurean tension between *amor* and ἀταραξία. The use of standard medical terminology here (*vexat corpora*, 2; *calor*, 2; *evincere morbos*, 3, 5)[52] gives a scientific bent to this poem reminiscent of the paradigm of Lucretius as physician, smearing the honey of his poetry on the cup that holds the bitter wormwood of his Epicurean cure.[53] In Sulpicia, it is *cura* itself that becomes the cure. Though written as an emotive and typically elegiac exploration of philosophical doctrine, Sulpicia's poem is nonetheless pointed and critical: for her, Lucretius is wrong; she can be free of her *mala* if only Cerinthus will love her too.

Sulpicia's commitment to mutual pleasure is further echoed in an aspect of her engagement with Lucretius that I have only touched on briefly: her invocation of Venus, evident in poem 3.13, among others. Venus is Lucretius's embodi-

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in the *Ars am.* undertaking a radical subversion of Lucretius's philosophical principles to present a "philosophy of the boudoir" in which pain is a component of pleasure. For further discussion of a serious, philosophical challenge to Lucretius in Ovid's amatory poems, see Sissa 2010 and most recently Gibson 2022, Hanses 2022 and Volk 2022. And note also that it is only in Ovid (*Am.* 2.16.47; *Her*. 8.15) that *cura* is *pia*, as it is at Sulpicia 3.17 (Tränkle 1990, 320; Fulkerson 2017, 290).

50 There is even a sensory distinction made between Lucretius's *frigida cura* and the *calor* that Sulpicia experiences, where the passion of the elegist counters the coolness induced by anxiety in Lucretius.

51 Cf. Lucr. 2.4 of the person who has achieved ἀταραξία: *quibus ipse malis careas* [. . .] *cernere suavest* ("it is sweet to see what ills you yourself are lacking").

52 Tränkle 1990, 320; Fulkerson 2017, 290–291.

53 Lucr. 1.936–942 = 4.11–17. See Caston 2006 for the ways in which the elegists Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid engage with this Lucretian paradigm in constructing their own alternatives to his Epicurean therapy. Though Caston does not treat Sulpicia, her argument makes clear that her refutation of Lucretius is a standard of elegy.

ment of *voluptas*,[54] and she is appropriately present in Sulpicia's poems in her capacity as love goddess. Consider again this passage from poem 3.13 (3–6):

exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.
exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret,
dicetur si quis non habuisse sua.

Begged by my muses, Cytherean Venus brought him
and put him down in my lap.
Venus has fulfilled her promises: let anybody tell of my pleasures,
if they will be said not to have had their own.

Here we see the Muses entreating Venus to bring forth the beloved (doubling as the poem) to our narrator. Significantly, when Venus brings him, she places him in his lover's "lap" (*sinum*, 4). There are numerous literary parallels with this image, the most intriguing of which is Lucretius's description of Mars and Venus in Book 1 of *De rerum natura* (29–40):

effice ut interea fera moenera militiai
per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescant
nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuvare
mortalis, quoniam belli fera moenera Mavors
armipotens regit, in gremium qui saepe tuum se
reiicit aeterno devictus vulnere amoris,
atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus
eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore.
hunc tu, diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto
circumfusa super, suavis ex ore loquelas
funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem.

Meanwhile, make it happen that the fierce works of war
grow quiet, calmed throughout the seas and over all the lands.
For you alone are able to gratify mortals
with tranquil peace, since Mars who has power over weapons
directs the fierce works of war, who often cast himself into your lap,
conquered by the eternal wound of love,
and looking up, his smooth neck leaned back,
he feeds upon the desirous sights, gaping at you with love, goddess,
and his breath hangs from your mouth as he leans his head back.

54 E.g., Lucr. 1.1–2: *Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas,* | *alma Venus* ("Mother of the sons of Aeneas, pleasure of gods and men, nourishing Venus"). See Bignone 1945, 430; Farrington 1952; Asmis 1982; Clay 1983, 151; Catto 1988, 101 and n. 14, 103–104.

You, goddess, having poured your sacred body over and around him
as he reclines, pour forth sweet sayings from your mouth
seeking for the Romans, glorious one, serene peace.

In this passage, Lucretius hymns to Venus and expresses his desire for peace since she is the only one with sway over Mars, the god of war and her lover. The tableau imagined here – one lover reclining in the lap of another – is a familiar literary scene. The poetic model comes from the fifth-century philosopher Empedocles, whose own *De natura* foregrounds personifications of the cosmic forces Love and Strife. Donncha O'Rourke has demonstrated how impactful these two figures – filtered through Lucretius's Venus and Mars – have been on the elegists Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid.[55] Lowell Edmunds argues for this episode's Hellenistic influence, suggesting that Lucretius draws from the same font as the elegists themselves. He notes similar scenes in Philodemus and Meleager, in which a man lies in the lap of a woman. He even goes so far as to suggest that the famous fresco in Pompeii's Villa of the Mysteries is a physical instantiation of this familiar literary image, with Bacchus in the lap of Ariadne.[56]

Sulpicia, therefore, has a wealth of sources from which she might be drawing for her poem 3.13. Yet Lucretius's Mars-Venus scene suggests itself most because, as we will see, Sulpicia often draws comparisons between herself and Venus in her poetry. An example of this comes in poem 3.8 – the first of her Garland of poems – where Sulpicia is imagined by the narrator as embodying, even rivaling the goddess of love in the eyes of Mars (1–4):

Sulpicia est tibi culta tuis, Mars magne, kalendis:
spectatum e caelo, si sapis, ipse veni.
hoc Venus ignoscet: at tu, violente, caveto
ne tibi miranti turpiter arma cadant.

Sulpicia is adorned for you on your Kalends, great Mars:
come from the sky yourself to see her, if you are wise.
Venus will forgive this: but you, violent one, be careful
that your weapons don't fall disgracefully as you wonder at her.

As mentioned above, Lucretius's Venus has an influence over Mars that is founded in their sexual relationship. It is for this reason she can be read as prefiguring the woman enjoying the mutual pleasures of sex in *De rerum natura* Book 4, with

55 O'Rourke 2014. See also Sedley 1998, 1–34.

56 Edmunds 2002, 346–350. The Hellenistic references are to Meleager *A.P.* 5.8.6 = Phld. 36.6 Sider; *A.P.* 5.165.5. Philodemus *A.P.* 525.1 = 15.1 Sider; *A.P.* 5.107.8 = 23.8 Sider.

which I began.[57] In Sulpicia's styling as a Venus, she demonstrates that she has a sexual power that equals that of the goddess of love over Mars. She shows that she has sexual agency. Considering this, it is strange that the narrator gives Mars a warning against impotence (4): *ne* [. . .] *arma cadant* ("don't let your weapons fall"). Yet if we remember that, as Laurel Fulkerson points out, "The couplet as a whole echoes Lucr. 1.33–38, in which Mars puts his armour aside to sit in Venus' lap,"[58] we can see that the poet had in mind Mars's tendency to drop his weapons in the presence of Venus – and so here, Sulpicia.

What is more, in the next poem, Sulpicia worries for Cerinthus as he goes on a hunt, drawing obvious parallels with the myth of Venus and Adonis. In the verses below, Sulpicia as narrator imagines that she will enjoy the woods if only the boar will go away and not distract Cerinthus from their lovemaking (3.9.15–20):

tunc mihi, tunc placeant silvae, si, lux mea, tecum
    arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas:
tunc veniat licet ad casses, illaesus abibit,
    ne Veneris cupidae gaudia turbet, aper.
nunc sine me sit nulla Venus, sed lege Dianae,
    caste puer, casta retia pange manu:

Then, then would the woods be a source of pleasure for me, if, my dear,
    I should be said to have slept with you before the hunting nets themselves:
then, though the boar comes to your snares, he will go away unharmed,
    lest he disturb the pleasures of eager Venus.
Now let there be no Venus without me, but by the law of Diana,
    chaste boy, lay a chaste hand on your nets.

Since Sulpicia here asserts her sexual pleasures with Cerinthus (*gaudia*) and desires that they be a subject of discussion (*arguar*), we can read this poem as a companion in the Garland to the sentiments expressed in 3.13, where Sulpicia similarly encourages a readership to speak about her pleasures (*mea gaudia narret*, 5). The *gaudia* in 3.9 are called the "pleasures of eager Venus" (*Veneris cupidae gaudia*, 18), a reference both to Venus as a goddess of sex and to Sulpicia's own identification with the goddess, with Cerinthus as her implied Adonis. When Sulpicia beseeches, "Now let there be no Venus without *me*" (*nunc sine me sit nulla Venus*, 19), she furthers this latter identification, linking herself to the goddess of love in the context of her sexual relationship with Cerinthus. In the same line, she contrasts Venus with the goddess Diana, the goddess of chastity, emphasizing that by "Venus" she also means sex. Read metapoetically, her appeal points to the mu-

57 See O'Rourke 2014, 22–23.
58 Fulkerson 2017, 227.

tuality of pleasure in sex and the mutual exchange of philosophical ideas that she has endorsed. Without her – that is, without her poetry – elegy lacks the voice of a female counterpart to the male and thus the other half of the elegiac conception of *amor* (and of the "pleasures of eager Venus"). When Sulpicia's self-conscious statements on the publication of her poem and herself in 3.13 are echoed in 3.9 of the Garland, then, Sulpicia's awareness of the literary discourse into which she enters is brought to the fore.[59] This is a male discourse, a learned discourse and, if we read Sulpicia as a Lucretian Venus, a philosophical one as well.

Yet of course, and to return to Lucretius in particular, Sulpicia does more than put herself in dialogue with the poet; she challenges his particular brand of Epicureanism. One of the ways in which she does this is by pointing out that Lucretius's Venus has sexual agency, that the woman who experiences *mutua gaudia*, "shared pleasures," in Book 4 is a sexual agent and that therefore perhaps mutual love – where the woman has as much agency as the man – is an acceptable alternative to the complete rejection of love Lucretius recommends. The same phenomenon that O'Rourke has observed in the other elegists is played out in Sulpicia: she exploits the flaws in Lucretius's argument, highlighting the moments when the Epicurean's text is erotodidactic, where it might undermine its own claims about erotic love and support hers.[60] Sulpicia even defiantly ends poem 3.9 by saying to her lover (23–24): *at tu venandi studium concede parenti,* | *et celer in nostros ipse recurre sinus* ("But you, leave eagerness for hunting to your father, and you yourself quickly run back into my lap"). Here she winks at Lucretius's Venus – whose lover Mars lies in her lap – as she embraces, celebrates, and most importantly speaks about her own sexuality.

Notably, Lucretius imagines a Venus who will use her power over Mars to inure him to the idea of Roman peace. Venus is the one prompting a retreat from war and political turmoil – embodying, as it were, the very goals of a good Epicurean. What the Lucretian Mars-Venus passage does in effect, then, is highlight the role women can play in engendering a loosening of cares, that is, in attaining ἀταραξία. Venus is the only one who can achieve peace for the Romans because she is the only one with power over Mars, her lover. That power is a sexual power. This is yet another reason why the Mars-Venus scene looks forward to the passage with which I began, where Lucretius creates the image of a woman as a partner in the "shared pleasures" of sex – in *communia gaudia*. To return to

59 I add the caveat that Batstone 2018 does not read 3.9, which Sulpicia narrates, as composed by the poet of 3.13–18. Rather, he sees 3.9 in particular (and the Garland in general) as a male author performing a ventriloquism of the feminine, and one inextricably entwined with male objectification.

60 O'Rourke 2014, esp. 22–23 on Ovid's reworking of Lucretian *erotodidaxis*.

poem 3.13, Sulpicia (like Venus) uses her sexuality to persuade men – namely, a male readership – that she has something to say about love. She takes her place in the elegiac canon by publishing her "pleasures" for the world to see. And in doing so, she becomes a female counterpart in a male discourse, perhaps like the earlier women of the Garden. If indeed ἑταῖραι, those were perhaps some of the most likely women to engage with a philosophy that promoted a kind of utilitarian sex practice – one dissociated from the obsessive attachment with which Lucretius defines *amor*.[61] Sulpicia transcends this dissociation when she asserts mutuality as her own solution to the problem of love's anxieties, marking herself as both a learned poet and a rival philosopher.

In her promotion of mutual pleasure in poem 3.13 in particular, Sulpicia makes pointed use of the word *gaudia* (*mea gaudia narret,* 5). This is a word that Lucretius makes explicitly sexual in the *De rerum natura* when describing the pleasures a woman can experience in sexual intercourse. And significantly, in the Latin literature before Sulpicia's time, it is only in Lucretius that a *woman* experiences *gaudia*.[62] This makes it all the more noteworthy when Sulpicia, in 3.13, encourages readers to "let anybody tell of my pleasures." We can imagine Sulpicia as a kind of Venus herself: just as Mars lies in Venus's lap, her lover Cerinthus reclines in Sulpicia's lap; and just as Venus can shape the discussion on war, Sulpicia is a woman capable of shaping the discussion on love – for an audience of women and men alike.

It is in the several allusive ways I have presented that Sulpicia inserts herself, not just into the poetic or elegiac discourse on love, but into the Epicurean one – a discourse that, from its inception, included women. More specifically, she challenges Epicurean conditions for *voluptas* – a word Lucretius codes as both sexual and philosophical "pleasure": she sees the sexual aspect of *voluptas* realized in her own poetry, in which *mutuus amor* supplants Lucretius's rejection of erotic love; and she sees the philosophical aspect of *voluptas* both in Philodemus's relationship with Xanthippe and in her own, learned engagement with the two Epicureans. Among these three authors, then, there is another kind of *mutua voluptas* between men and women – a shared literary discourse. And while she is in turn inspired by

61 E.g., Lucr. 4.1058–1061.

62 I assume here an Augustan date for Sulpicia (see n. 11 above). The more than 100 occurrences of *gaudium* among Plautus, Terence, Ennius and Cicero are non-sexual and experienced by men. Catullus uses the word to convey "joys" (as opposed to sadness). Sallust uses the word once with a vaguely sexual connotation (*dediti corporis gaudiis, Iug.* 2.4), but every other time with the non-sexual meaning of "joys" (usually joy in battle). Publilius Syrus's maxims contain eight occurrences of *gaudium*, some of which carry a possible sexual connotation (in particular the phrase: *in Venere semper certat dolor et gaudium*, 370).

and critical of these earlier Epicurean thinkers, this learned woman is careful not to make herself the κορωνίς, the "final flourish" of the pen, closing out the conversation on pleasure – both sexual and philosophical, elegiac and Epicurean. Rather, through her self-conscious publications she opens the door for other elegists to engage with Epicurean poetry in their own ways, and to engage with her own poetry, creating yet another instance of shared discourse and of mutual pleasure.

Nicholas Winters

Chapter 4
The Epicurean Project of the *Ciris*

The *Ciris* has suffered the fate of many an ancient work of dubious authorship. Its own character, quality and content have been overlooked or subordinated to the fraught question of its origin. Peculiarities in the treatment of its subject matter (e.g. Amor as the avenger of a slight against Juno) are usually taken as signs of an inferior (and therefore anonymous) poet who is not in control of his art.[1] Even the explicitly Epicurean stance of the author in the proem is dismissed as a mere contrivance of a Vergilian imitator,[2] with no bearing on the work after the author recuses himself from writing a didactic poem in the tradition of Lucretius. This essay will attempt to receive the *Ciris* on its own terms, to take the author at his word and to consider the poem in the tradition of the ludic enjoyment of poetry by the Epicurean sage (or student) in the context of philosophical *recusatio*.

Structure and Plot of the *Ciris*

The first one hundred lines of the *Ciris*[3] comprise a proem in which the author lays out his thematic program. After a brief autobiography declaring his philosophical aspirations (1–11), the poet turns to his addressee, Messalla,[4] both to praise him and to offer apologies for not attaching his name to a work of greater seriousness (e.g. a Lucretian didactic poem). This section (12–47) includes an elaborate comparison of the author's ideal poem to the magnificent peplos presented to Athena at the Panathenaic festival (21–41). The remainder of the proem is devoted to a disambiguation of the chosen myth of Scylla, daughter of Nisus, from the other mythic characters of that name. The author is especially keen to dis-

1 Housman 1903; Lyne 1978, 164.

2 Lyne 1978, 54–56.

3 For quotations of the *Ciris* I have used the text of Fairclough 1934, except that I have adopted the readings of Lyne 1978 where there is textual disagreement between the two. Translations are my own.

4 Although there is no consensus about who this Messalla might be (Lyne 1978, 54–55), it seems reasonable to assume that M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus is meant in view of literary-historical references. Corvinus' literary circle included Sulpicia (his niece), Ovid and Tibullus; Horace addresses an ode to him (3.21) and Momigliano 1941 persuasively argues that he was an Epicurean (153).

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tance his Scylla from the monster faced by Odysseus. Finally, lines 92–100 invoke the Muses, asking them to bless the poem and to crown it with eternal honor.

The remaining 441 lines of the *Ciris* recount the myth in which Scylla falls in love with Minos, who is besieging her city, Megara (100–119). The city is supernaturally protected as long as a lock of red hair on the head of Scylla's father, Nisus, remains unshorn (120–128). Amor causes Scylla to fall in love with Minos as a punishment for having profaned the temple of Juno while playing ball (129–162). Finding no relief from her passion, she finally goes to cut the red lock from Nisus' hair while he sleeps, intending to send it to Minos and win his love (163–219). Her nurse, Carme, the mother of Britomart, catches Scylla on the way to her father's bedroom, extracts from her the story of her trouble and her plan and persuades her to convince her father instead to allow Scylla to marry Minos in order to secure a peace (220–339). When neither plea nor attempted magic prove sufficient to change Nisus' mind, Carme joins Scylla in cutting off his red hair (340–387). Minos takes Megara, but rejects Scylla and instead drags her, lamenting, behind his ship as he sails away (388–480). Amphitrite takes pity on Scylla because of her beauty and transforms her into a Ciris bird (481–519). Jupiter then transforms Nisus into a sea-eagle, to chase the Ciris forever as the Scorpion chases Orion (520–541), and so the poem ends.

Epicurean Thought in the *Ciris*

The author of the *Ciris* takes pains to provide himself, in the proem, with the persona of a young poet, freshly educated in the Epicurean school and eager to pursue grand philosophical projects. Despite this, the *Ciris* is not generally considered to contain much in the way of Epicurean philosophy outside of lip-service done in the first one hundred lines. This reading of the poem is implausible in view of the proem's rhetorical organization, which consists in a sophisticated *recusatio*. In this version of the strategy, the poet claims that he is not yet up to the task of writing a Lucretian didactic poem (14–20). He begs his addressee, Messalla, to accept instead this long-promised gift of a mythological poem (44–47), even though it is not how the poet would prefer to honor him. It is easy to see how this type of *recusatio* could be taken as the mere self-deprecating posture of a *doctus poeta*,[5] or even as the shame-faced apology of a young Vergil for continuing to cling to his love of poetry despite the supposed Epicurean injunction against it.[6] However it is inter-

5 Brezigheimer 2005, 224.

6 Rostagni 1961, 213.

preted, the poet's *recusatio* seems also to have excused most scholars from seeking any philosophical content in the body of the poem itself. Even Augusto Rostagni and Gerlinde Bretzigheimer, who have considered the philosophical orientation of the poem (albeit in the service of the ongoing *Cirisfrage*), have both taken the *recusatio* as an excuse for the poem's neglect of true Epicurean principles.[7] Here again, the *Ciris* has suffered from an unfortunate scholarly misconception that poetic composition is contrary to the Epicurean project.

The question of Epicurean poetics has been explored with subtlety in Dirk Obbink *Philodemus and Poetry* (1995), in which several scholars make a case against the supposed prohibition. Diskin Clay, in his chapter, "Framing the Margins of Philodemus and Poetry," points out that there is far from sufficient evidence in Epicurus' own writings to formulate an "orthodox" stance on writing poetry.[8] The idea of Epicurean hostility toward poetry seems to be based on only a few quotations, two of which concern not poetry as such, but traditional Greek education.[9] Epicurus himself quotes poetry in his writings, including the *Odyssey*, from which the banquet of the Phaeacians is taken as a model for the Epicurean Garden.[10] Although the true sage would not pursue poetry as a career, there is nothing to prevent him from enjoying ludic poetry with his friends as a natural, if unnecessary, pleasure.[11] This much is admitted by Rostagni and Bretzigheimer.[12] Elizabeth Asmis and David Sider further demonstrate that neither the composition nor the criticism of serious poetry is avoided by later Epicurean circles.[13] Lucretius may have felt that he had to defend his poetic project against a general prejudice dismissing the utility of poetry for the expression of philosophical ideas, but the poetry of the *De rerum natura* is more than a mere ornament to attract the uninitiated to philosophy. It is an exercise of the Epicurean ideal of mental clarity, by which a wise man sees the physical world as it truly is: beautiful.[14] Philodemus, himself a poet, shows by the very vehemence with which he attacks the literary critics who assert that only the sound, and not the meaning, of a poem is important, that an Epicurean could understand the content of poetry as a matter of moral utility and philosophical gravity.[15] Finally, Vergil himself associated with Philodemus and his

7 Rostagni 1961, 210; Bretzigheimer 2005, 224.
8 Clay 1995, 5.
9 Clay 1995, 3–4.
10 Asmis 1995a, 16.
11 Sider 1995, 39.
12 Rostagni 1961, 212–213; Bretzigheimer 2005, 164.
13 Asmis 1995a, 15, 33; Sider 1995, 40–41.
14 Asmis 1995a, 33–34.
15 Asmis 1995b, 175.

circle,[16] incorporated many of their Epicurean ideas into his works[17] and, according to Sider, is the author of several of the Epicurean poems of the *Catalepton*.[18]

There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that the author of the *Ciris* considers his newfound philosophy contrary to his poetry as such. Nevertheless, the Epicurean stance on the nature of the gods (as blessed and indifferent to mortal concerns) could easily be a stumbling-block to writers of mythological poetry. By presenting himself as a philosopher and insisting that "Polyhymnia loves truth" (55), the author has opened himself to a possible Epicurean criticism of his mythological content. One could interpret the proem as a kind of dodge from this criticism, or as the author's elaborate excuse for writing what he wants (an unphilosophical flight of fancy) instead of what he ought (an Epicurean didactic poem). In this view, however, the author would have spent nearly a fifth of his poem defending himself against a charge that he himself fabricated. Why exert the effort to elaborate his philosophical intentions, only to render them irrelevant? If we assume, on the contrary, that his Epicurean pose is purposeful and relevant to the poem as a whole, it enables us to read the proem as a program for the philosophical content of the mythical narrative to follow.

The Proem

The first eleven lines of the *Ciris* are framed by the central theme of the poem: *amor*. The author, using his own shortcomings as a foil to show the superiority of philosophy, confesses himself to be "cast about by the love of praise" (*iactatum laudis amore,* 1) and asks that he be allowed to, "put aside that flattering love" (*blandum* [. . .] *deponere amorem*, 11). The juxtaposition of *amor* with words such as *iactatum* and *blandum*, and with images such as *irritaque* [. . .] *fallacis praemia volgi* ("the empty rewards of the fickle crowd," 2), conveys a strong impression of the deceptive power of love. The theme of reason suspended or corrupted by erotic love can be traced back to the Greek lyric poets;[19] but the ability of *amor insanus* to make one desire vain or false goods is both a prominent trope of Epicu-

16 Gigante 1998, 45–55, 57–98, and 127–128. For the mention of Vergil's name in the Herculaneum papyri, see Gigante/Capasso 1989.

17 See Gigante 2004 for a thorough summary.

18 Sider 1995, 37–38.

19 E.g. Archilochus: fr. 112 (Campbell 1967, 8): τοῖος γάρ φιλότητος ἔρως ὑπὸ καρδίην ἐλυσθείς | πολλὴν κατ᾽ ἀχλὺν ὀμμάτων ἔχευεν, | κλέψας ἐκ στηθέων ἁπαλὰς φρένας ("Such a desire for love, coiled up under my heart, poured a heavy mist before my eyes, stealing the softened wits from my breast").

rean thought in particular[20] and the primary lesson of the *Ciris*. Lines 3–8 offer a sampling of the glories of philosophy as framed by the foil of the author's imperfections. Overtly Epicurean vocabulary (often evocative of Lucretius) fills these lines. For example, 3–4: *Cecropius suavis exspirans hortulus auras | florentis viridi sophiae complectitur umbra* ("The Garden of Attica, breathing sweet breezes, enfolds me in the verdant shade of flowering wisdom")[21] and 7–8: *altius ad magni suspexit sidera mundi | et placitum paucis ausa est ascendere collem* ("[My mind] has gazed on high at the stars of the vast world, and has dared to climb the hill that is pleasing to so few").[22] We are presented with the image of a poet who, though hindered by his worldly desires, longs to grow in wisdom. On this foundation lines 9–11 express the author's intentions and hopes for the present work-:

> non tamen absistam coeptum detexere munus
> in quo iure meas utinam requiescere Musas
> et leviter blandum liceat deponere amorem.
>
> I will not, however, desist from weaving the work I have begun,
> in which duty I pray that my Muses may rest
> and that it may be permitted to lightly put aside that flattering love.

Although these lines, in a minor *recusatio,* excuse the author from writing a *Dignum* [. . .] *carmen* (5), by invoking the priority of a task already begun, they do not excuse him from his philosophical obligations, as R. O. A. M. Lyne would have it.[23] On the contrary, his prayer to be allowed to lay aside the *laudis amorem* of the first line shows that he hopes in the present poem to exercise his newfound wisdom.

Lines 12–47 serve two interrelated purposes: they honor the addressee, Messalla, and elaborate the *recusatio* of line 9. They are framed by clear allusions to the *De rerum natura*. Lines 12–20 invoke the opening of Book 2, in which the poet looks down on the errors of men and their lowly cares.[24] In lines 35–47, the au-

20 See e.g. DL 10.118, Cic. *Fin.* 1.33, Lucr. 4.1073–1154 and 5.45–46; see also Davis 2011 *passim* and Davis 2020, 456–475.

21 The *Cecropius hortulus* is the most explicit reference to the Garden of Epicurus in Athens. In line 15, the *quattuor antiquis heredibus* are commonly understood to be the founders of the four major philosophical schools, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno and Epicurus (see Fairclough 1934, 406).

22 For these passages cf. Lucr. 2.1–5, where *suavis* appears three times in the famous prologue, or 1.140 in reference to the terms on which the author hopes to establish a friendship with Memmius, his dedicatee and notional student in Epicureanism; similar vocabulary and phrasing can be seen also at 2.321–328 and 5.772–787.

23 Lyne 1978, 101.

24 *Ciris* 16–17: *si me iam summa Sapientia pangeret arce | unde hominum errores longe lateque per orbem | despicere atque humilis possem contemnere curas* ("If only Wisdom now sets me in

thor wishes that he could honor Messalla by weaving his name into "the great pages of the nature of things" (*naturae rerum magnis* [. . .] *chartis*, 39), even though it is permitted to them (in their Epicurean friendship) to divert themselves and "to close a simple verse with a delicate foot" (*gracilem molli* [. . .] *pede claudere versum*, 20).[25] He begs Messalla to accept this humbler gift instead (46), since this is the first time "I have risen to such arts" (*ad tantas* [. . .] *nascimur artes*, 42). Lines 44–46 then provide a critical point to this *recusatio* (44–46):

> haec tamen interea, quae possumus, in quibus aevi
> prima rudimenta et iuvenes exegimus annos
> accipe dona meo multum vigilata labore.
>
> In the meantime, however, accept these gifts that I am able to offer,
> on which I have spent my youthful years and the first endeavors of my life,
> produced by my labor in many a sleepless night.

That is, the current poem is the result of his preliminary education. Compare these lines, however, to lines 5–8:[26]

> mens ut quiret eo dignum sibi quaerere carmen
> longe aliud studium inque alios accincta labores
> altius ad magni suspexit sidera mundi
> et placitum paucis ausa est ascendere collem.
>
> so that my mind might seek for itself a song worthy of [the Garden],
> though it has been long equipped for other interests and other endeavors,
> it has gazed on high at the stars of the vast world,
> and has dared to climb the hill that is pleasing to so few.

The authorial persona developed in the proem is that of a young man who was originally on track for some worldly career, but then turned toward philosophy. More importantly, although he is still forming himself in wisdom, he has been occupied with philosophy for long enough to justify the perfect tense of the verbs *suspexit* and *ausa est*. The claim at lines 44–45 is that the *Ciris* is the fruit of both stages of his education: the more traditional *prima rudimenta* and the philosophy of his *iuvenes annos*. Given this autobiographical framework, we ought to expect that the *Ciris*, though admittedly not of the highest type of philosophical poetry (i.e. Lucretian didactic), shall nevertheless be informed by an Epicurean outlook.

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her high citadel, whence I may be able to look down, far and wide, upon the delusions of men throughout the whole world and despise their worldly anxieties"). Cf. Lucr. 2.6–10.

25 Cf. Sider 1995, 41.

26 Fairclough 1934 and Lyne 1978 disagree about what part of this quotation is parenthetical.

The *recusatio* of this section of the proem does not dismiss Epicurean ideas from the remainder of the poem, but only explains the humbler, more traditional poetic form they will take.

Within the main *recusatio* is an extended simile (21–38) comparing the Lucretian poem the author would like to write for Messalla with the peplos presented to Athena at the Panathenaia. This simile, in which weaving and poetry are metaphorically equivalent, is anchored not only to the rest of the proem, but to the entirety of the *Ciris* through the repetition of weaving verbs.[27] Since the first purpose of the simile is to honor Messalla, these repetitions serve as echoes of his importance to the poem. Both the simile and its echoes also serve the philosophical program of the author. Bretzigheimer has compared the simile, in which the peplos is adorned with depictions of Athena's exploits in the Gigantomachy, to several passages in Ovid detailing the exploits of Jupiter in the same war.[28] In the examples from Ovid, the contributions of the rest of the gods' army are ignored in favor of emphasizing the role of Jupiter. Similarly, in the peplos simile, only Athena's victories are mentioned. The purpose of this foreshortening, according to Bretzigheimer, is to amplify the honor of the addressee (in Ovid's case Augustus), by analogy with the divine example. In the case of Messalla, whom the poet addresses in line 36 as *iuvenum doctissime*, the divine example to whom he is compared is not Jupiter, the god of power and ruling authority, but Minerva (the counterpart of Athena in the Roman pantheon) – and Minerva not merely as a goddess of war, but also, through the repeated and central imagery of weaving, as a goddess of craft, knowledge and wisdom. Messalla, then, is being honored by this poem not for his military prowess or his statecraft so much as for his wisdom. It is therefore highly implausible to assume that, after declaring himself an Epicurean and praising his patron for wisdom in a simile that reechoes throughout the poem, the author intends to abandon his philosophical concerns in the remainder of the poem in order to indulge his other (non-didactic) poetic inclinations.

There is still the potential criticism to be dealt with, that an Epicurean philosopher ought not to write obviously fictional mythical tales about gods feeling human passions and interfering in human affairs. Lucretius, however, explicitly lays out several heuristic models for engaging with traditional myth that are acceptable to his Epicurean perspective. At the lowest level, people may safely personify elements of the natural world as gods, such as wine, grain and the sea as Bacchus, Ceres and Neptune, so long as they keep themselves free of "religion."[29]

27 *Detexere* (9), *intexere* (21, 39, 502), *texere* (29, 333).

28 *Am*. 2.1.11–16, *Met*. 10.149–151, *Fast*. 3.439–442, 5.35–42, *Tr*. 2.69–72, *Pont*. 4.8.59–60 (Bretzigheimer 2005, 162).

29 Lucr. 2.655–660.

Then, the prologue to Book 5 suggests a Euhemerist view of mythology, in which gods such as Bacchus, Ceres and Hercules represent human achievements or heroes that were deified because of the great benefits they bestowed. Lucretius argues that Epicurus deserves to be deified in a similar way.[30] Finally, in a passage in Book 3 Lucretius expounds a kind of proto-psychological interpretation of mythological stories and figures such as Tantalus, Tityus and Sisyphus;[31] the clear implication of these passages is that an Epicurean may draw upon the mythological tradition in his poetry, provided that he interprets it according to an acceptable heuristic model and uses it to promote Epicurean wisdom.[32]

Rostagni astutely points out that the care which the author devotes at lines 54–91 to distancing his myth from the monstrous Scylla of the *Odyssey* and other poems may be a partial answer to this criticism.[33] The author dismisses the other myths as unbelievable (62) and as mere *somnia* (90).[34] He cites the multiplicity of differing versions of Homer's tale and dwells at length (65–88) on the gruesomeness and unnaturalness of Scylla the monster. Promoting his own version of the myth, he says (89–91):

> quidquid et ut quisque est tali de clade locutus
> somnia sunt: potius liceat notescere Cirin
> atque unam ex multis Scyllam non esse puellis.
>
> Whatever and however each has spoken of such a calamity,
> all are dreams: rather let it be known that Scylla is the Ciris
> and not one among a multitude of girls.

The claim is not only that the other Scylla myths are mistakes and false dreams, but that the creature concerned in this true myth is not deformed or fantastical, but a well-known and graceful bird. Especially important is that the Ciris myth of Scylla does away with the fictional monster and its many variants, only providing

30 Lucr. 5.1–54.

31 Lucr. 3.978–1023.

32 For a more extensive, and in some cases a stricter view specifically of Lucretian engagement with mythology, see Gale 1994, 26–45; Gigandet 1998, 21–34 and 169–196; Craca 2000, especially 25–42 and 127–149, with thanks to the reviewer who suggested these counterarguments. Even within the more rigid limitations on the potential use of mythology in Epicurean poetics, however, the author of the *Ciris* is clearly attempting to place the poem in the context of his early Epicurean education. It therefore seems best to give the benefit of the doubt and to seek an interpretation of the poem consistent with the author's self-introduction.

33 Rostagni 1961, 221.

34 *Somnia sunt* is Heyne's reading, adopted by Fairclough. Lyne's reading is *vulgatum*, but the corrupted manuscripts readings are *omnia sim / suam / sunt*, so *somnia sunt* seems a decidedly more elegant emendation.

an etiology for a factual creature of ordinary experience.[35] The least believable fabrications are thus removed, and the myth is reduced almost to a moral fable, albeit including some supernatural persons and forces. For an Epicurean poet to use mythology in this way, in the service of a moral admonition between friends, is clearly permissible – Lucretius himself has recourse to traditional mythology in order to make his moral points.[36]

In this regard, the extended priamel of lines 54–91 includes certain literary allusions that place the poet squarely in the company of his Epicurean predecessors. Lines 56–57 (*longe alia perhibent mutatam membra figura* | *Scyllaeum monstro saxum infestante vocari*) may echo either or both of the two mentions of "Scyllas" in the *De rerum natura*. The first occurs at 4.732: *Centauros itaque et Scyllarum membra videmus*, where the appearance of "Scyllas" is accounted for by the theory of simulacra, which is tied into an account of dreams.[37] The second mention of Scyllas, at 5.892–894 (*aut rapidis canibus succinctas semimarinis* | *corporibus Scyllas et cetera de genere horum,* | *inter se quorum discordia membra videmus*), interprets them as impossible hybrids in a psychological and physical allegory, arguing that everything preserves its own nature. In addition to these Lucretian references, lines 59–61 are taken almost verbatim from Vergil's own reference to the Scylla myth in Silenus' song of the sixth eclogue (75–77):

> candida succinctam latrantibus inguina monstris
> Dulichias vexasse rates et gurgite in alto
> deprensos nautas canibus lacerasse marinis.[38]
>
> that girt with slavering monsters about her shining loins,
> she ravaged the ships of Ithaca, and in the deep maelstrom
> tore apart with sea-hounds the sailors she had seized.

Lines 68–69 apply Lucretius' proto-psychological interpretation of myth (from 3.978–1023) to Scylla directly, in proposing that in the *Odyssey* version she may represent the vice of lust and sexual desire: *sive* [. . .] *hoc in carmine toto* | *inguinis est vitium et veneris descripta libido*[39] ("or whether, throughout this song, she is represented as the vice of the loins and the lust of sensuality").

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35 Rostagni 1961, 221.

36 Rostagni 1961, 221–222.

37 Cf. *Ciris* 90 (*somnia sunt*) and n. 31 above for the reading.

38 The only difference between the two passages is that line 77 of the eclogue reads *A! timidos nautas* instead of *deprensos nautas*.

39 This interpretation of the Homeric passage is entirely conjectural on the part of the *Ciris* poet, since no connection is made in the *Odyssey* between Scylla and any love, lust or sexual misconduct.

Finally, the author's choice to locate Homer's birthplace at Colophon implies a direct link between Homer and Epicurus himself, whose early studies in philosophy took place there under Nausiphanes. The poet, then, situates his version of the Scylla tale at the peak of a tradition of Epicurean interpretations of the myth.

Through the competitive posturing of the priamel, the poet takes ownership of mythological poetry about Scylla as an Epicurean project and asserts the superiority of his own version, in which the monstrous elements are removed, and attention is redirected to the moral and etiological tale. The remaining question, then, is whether or not the myth of the *Ciris*, when read as a moral fable, successfully expounds an Epicurean position.

The Myth

The mythological body of the *Ciris* is striking in that it pays little or no attention to certain events which are critical to the understanding of the plot. For example, the actual shearing of Nisus' red lock takes only two lines (386–387). The contract between Minos and Scylla is not described, but is only presented as one possible motivation for her actions (187) and is later mentioned by Scylla in her lament (414–415). Minos' rejection of Scylla is neglected entirely (though it is implied in her accusations against him during her lament, 455–458) and the poem passes immediately from the sacking of Megara (itself granted only one line, 388) to Scylla being dragged behind Minos' ship (389–390). Instead of a narrative plot, the poem focuses at length on several almost impressionistic scenes: the initial wounding of Scylla by Amor (158–190), the dialogue between Scylla and Carme (220–348), the failure to move Nisus to make peace (349–385), the punishment and lament of Scylla (389–480) and the transformation of Scylla and Nisus into seabirds (481–541). On a close reading, it can be seen that these areas of focus provide the poet with a set of cautionary tales that point to four standard Epicurean moral lessons: (1) the evils of *amor insanus*,[40] (2) the proper offices of *amicitia*,[41] (3) the folly of confidence in the permanence of one's circumstances[42] and (4) the folly of the fear of death.[43] It is in the use of the

40 See above (n. 17) for specific primary and secondary references on this topic.

41 See e.g. *Men.* (DL 10.135), KD 27 and 28; Cicero*: Fin.* 1.65–70; for further discussion see Mitsis 2020.

42 See e.g. *Men.* (DL 10.127, 133–134); KD 14, 16, 28 (DL 10.139–154); SV 28, 39, 56–57, 66; Lucr. 5.91–109, 338–350 and 6.9–34; for further discussion see Asmis 2020, 189–220.

43 See e.g. *Hdt.* (DL 10.81); *Men.* (DL 10.124); KD 2; Lucr. 3.830–869; Phld. *PHerc*. 1005, 4.10–14 (see Arrighetti 1960, 499); for further discussion see Rosenbaum 2020, 118–140.

myth to teach these lessons that the author of the *Ciris* lives up to his persona as an Epicurean poet.

The Evils of *amor insanus*

The caution against unbalanced or immoderate love is the central theme of the *Ciris* (a story about how an unrestrained love destroyed a city, a girl and her father) and therefore receives the bulk of the poet's attention. Indeed, the first vivid image of the poem presents the author himself driven or tossed about by love, albeit love of praise rather than sexual passion (1): *Etsi me iactatum laudis amore*. And although the explicit references to Epicurus and the Garden are confined to the prologue, the theme of *amor insanus* in the central myth is emphasized and contextualized as an Epicurean idea through strong intertextual links to Vergil's *Eclogae* and Lucretius. The quotation of *Eclogae* 6 in the priamel is noted above, and the song of Silenus in which it appears recounts a full series of tales about metamorphosis and *amor insanus*, including Hylas, Pasiphae,[44] Philomela[45] and Scylla herself. The catalogue of Silenus' song also includes a reference to Gallus, whose own tale of *amor insanus* is recounted more fully in *Eclogae* 10 – the origin of the phrase *omnia vincit amor* (69), which is quoted in the *Ciris* at 437 and referenced at 427 (notably with *amor* replaced by *scelus*). Finally, Silenus' song, like the *Ciris*, begins with a philosophical prologue (31–40) that clearly invokes Lucretian imagery.[46]

Within the central myth itself, the imagery and vocabulary repeatedly link sexual desire with destructive madness. Once the scene is set and the premise of the red lock of hair laid out (100–128), Scylla is introduced as *correpta furore* (130), because she looked on Minos with *nimium cupidis* [. . .] *ocellis* (132). Amor (he is never called "Cupid" but is called "Amor" thrice, at 289, 329 and 437) is named as the avenger of Scylla's unwitting profanation of Juno's temple, and her subsequent perjury. This choice of Amor over Jupiter "qua Zeus Ὅρκιος"[47] has caused some perplexity. The poet himself makes an effort to justify his choice, claiming that Juno feared to show Scylla to Jupiter (157) but that Amor is always

44 Pasiphae is called *virgo infelix* twice (47 and 52), a phrase which is echoed in the *Ciris* several times. Scylla is called *infelix virgo* three times (71, 167 and 517) and simply *infelix* four additional times (155, 190, 318 and 402). The word *infelix* is only used of Scylla throughout the *Ciris*.

45 In the *Ciris*, Scylla claims to be related to Philomela's sister, Procne, at 410.

46 For more on the close intertextuality between the *Eclogae* and the *De rerum natura*, see Giesecke 1999 and Davis 201.

47 Lyne 1978, 164.

looking for falsehood to punish (158–159; Lyne, on page 165, calls this assertion "unparalleled"). A. E. Housman imputes neglect to Jupiter, and characterizes Amor as "thrusting himself into the vacant judgment seat" out of spite.[48] Lyne attempts to explain the author's unusual choice by supposing that he has adapted a scene from Calvus in which "the role of Cupid would not have to be so artificially contrived";[49] but although the choice of Amor as avenger over Jupiter is unusual, it serves the philosophical purpose of orienting the story toward an awareness of the destructive power of love.

The connection of *amor* with *furor* is explicitly developed in the lines immediately following (163–190). These lines describe the *validus furor* (164) that overtakes Scylla as Amor's punishment. Scylla is compared to a *saeva* Thracian woman (165) and a priestess of Cybele (166). She is called *infelix* (see note 41), *tristis* (174, though this may also refer to her *querellas*) and *demens* (185), and she is said to "rave like a bacchante" (167), "dwell on her complaints" (174) and "feel death sliding through her guts" (182).

Scylla's lament as she is being dragged behind Minos' ship, particularly lines 427–437, puts the denunciation of immoderate love into Scylla's own mouth. She describes herself as a *decepta puella* (429) and cries that *me malus abstulit error* (430). She laments that she loved Minos above her own father's kingdom (428), i.e. without *modus* or restraint. Her cry of *omnia vicit amor* (437) is paralleled by another of *scelus omnia vincit* (427).

The notion of love as destructive madness is by no means unique to Epicurean thought, but it resonates with the orthodox Epicurean treatment of the dangers of an unbridled type of erotic passion. In particular, the focus given to error and excess as features of love in the *Ciris* evoke the Epicurean moral ideals of moderation and clarity. These ideals are even more explicitly evoked in the interlude between Scylla and Carme (the longest single scene in the poem), which presents a common trope of Epicurean poetry: the friend offering a remedy against immoderate passions.[50]

The Proper Offices of *amicitia*

When Carme discovers Scylla sneaking off to her father's room, her first thought is that Scylla might be in love with her father, which Carme loudly prays against

48 Housman 1903, 308, 306.
49 Lyne 1978, 164.
50 Cf. Verg. *E.* 10, 9–31.

(237–240). She offers, however, that if Scylla is tossed about (*iactaris*) by a *concessus amor*, she will do everything in her power to help Scylla achieve her desire (241–249). Although it is presented with greater pathos than an Epicurean sage might prefer[51] (which might be accounted for by the femininity of the characters), this stance is perfectly consonant with Epicurean ideas of friendship. The friend must frankly and steadfastly oppose any immoderate or erroneous desires in his friend, but may help the friend obtain natural and lawful pleasures where possible.[52]

When Scylla unburdens herself of her secret intentions to cut off her father's hair out of love for Minos (257–282), Carme reacts strongly against it. She "laments heavily" (285) that Minos is to be the source of a second destruction for her and takes over twenty lines of digression (286–309) to retell the story of her daughter Britomart, who died trying to escape the advances of Minos. She rebukes Minos at 288–289, saying (in apostrophe to Britomart):

> semper ut aut olim natae te propter eundum
> aut Amor insanae luctum portavit alumnae!
>
> How, always on your account, has Love brought grief,
> either to my child long ago, or to my raving foster-child!

Carme then tries to convince Scylla to be patient (310–339). She reminds her of the consequences of her actions (321), of the heinousness of the intended crime (327) and of Carme's own wish to see her happily married (315–317). In a second apostrophe, to Amor this time, Carme admits (328–329): *non ego te incepto (fieri quod non pote) conor | flectere, Amor, neque est cum dis contendere nostrum!* ("I shall not attempt to turn you aside, O Love, from what you have begun – which is utterly impossible – nor is it ours to strive with the gods"). But Carme pleads with Scylla to wait and try to convince Nisus to allow her to marry Minos when they have come to a peace agreement, instead of gratifying her desire in an immediate and disastrous way (330–332). If Nisus will not consent, then Carme will help Scylla get what she wants (333–339). Scylla is persuaded and returns to bed.

Carme is far from a perfect Epicurean friend. She is too deeply affected herself and too sympathetic with the feelings of her ward to oppose Scylla's immoderate wishes with the steadiness demanded by true Epicurean *amicitia.* But the interlude with Carme does not represent an ideal, but rather the tragic failure to

51 The pathos of the poem in general, though it may not fit the common conception of proper expression for an Epicurean sage, is by no means contrary to Epicurean poetics (cf. Lucr. 1.80–101).

52 Cf. Phld. *De lib. dic.*; Cic. *Fin.* 2.20.

achieve an ideal. Part of the tragedy of the poem is that Carme was almost successful. That is, if Carme had been better equipped for the offices of friendship, she could have more permanently assuaged Scylla's misguided emotions.

The women do attempt, however, to achieve Scylla's wish through the lawful, sensible means of a peace treaty and marriage (349–361). It is only after Nisus refuses to make peace that Scylla reverts to her original plan. Nisus' stubbornness represents another failure to live up to an Epicurean ideal.

The Folly of Confidence in the Permanence of Circumstance

At line 349, Scylla awakes the next morning and attempts to convince her father to make peace. When her meager eloquence is unsuccessful, she turns to deceit (362–368) and frightens the citizens with terror of the gods (another failure of Epicurean morality[53]), even bribing the seers. Carme, in a display of further baseness, tries to use magic on Nisus, but all her efforts prove unsuccessful (378–380):

> nulla movet stabilem fallacia Nisum,
> nec possunt homines nec possunt flectere divi
> (tanta est in parvo fiducia crine cavendi)
>
> no trick moves the steadfast Nisus,
> nor can men, nor can gods turn him aside
> (so great is his faith in a little lock of hair for protection)

One might find Nisus admirable here, since he remains unmoved by *fallacia*. On the other hand, the reason for his steadiness is not expressed in complimentary terms. His trust in such a small thing as his lock of supernatural red hair is itself a folly. He does not consider his own impermanence or the tenuous balance of his city's safety, and so does not accept the more practical and stable condition of peace through a marriage treaty. Nisus thus fails in a key tenet of Epicurean morality and a common moral γνώμη of Epicurean poetry: do not fall into the trap of believing your circumstances to be permanent. This is the primary argument behind all "carpe diem" poetry[54] and one of the certain marks that distinguishes the wise man from the fool is his refusal to become complacent in good fortune

53 Cf. DL 10.123–124.
54 Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 1.9.

or to despair in bad.[55] Nisus, along with Scylla and Carme, is another foil against which to measure the beatitude of the sage. By the end of the poem, Amphitrite will have provided just one more.

The Folly of the Fear of Death

The poet of the *Ciris* does not spare his reader any sense of the physical or emotional pain suffered by Scylla as she is dragged behind Minos' ship. The tragedy serves to drive home the lessons. At the last minute, however, a moment of hope seems to be offered: Amphitrite, who has watched Scylla's punishment, cannot bear for such a beautiful girl to die in the waves and decides to save her by transforming her into the Ciris (489): *Amyclaeo formosior ansere Ledae* ("more beautiful than the swan of Amyclae to Leda").

There is a sense in which the poet seems unable to make up his mind about whether the transformation of Scylla is a punishment or a gift. When it is first introduced in lines 48–53 of the proem, the metamorphosis is explained as a punishment for Scylla's crime (52–53): *hanc pro purpureo poenam scelerata capillo,* | *pro patris solvens excisa et funditus urbe* ("the defiled girl, paying this penalty for the purple lock, for her father's city, which she utterly destroyed"). Later, however, when Scylla is first contemplating her treachery, the poet again foretells the outcome of events in an apostrophe directed first to Nisus and then to other birds of the air, including Philomela and Procne (191–205). When addressing Nisus, the poet continues to portray the Ciris-transformation as a punishment (194): *dabit tibi filia poenas*. On the other hand, when he turns to address the birds, he bids them rejoice (*gaudete*) three times (195, 197 and 200). This tone could be dismissed on grounds that, no matter how Nisus and Scylla might feel about it, the other birds (especially formerly human ones) will be glad for additional company. The author himself suggests this at 200–202. But such an explanation is not sufficient to account for the lines in which bid Philomela and Procne fly into the ether (202–205):

> [. . .] vos, o pulcherrima quondam
> corpora, caeruleas praevertite in aethera nubes,
> qua novus ad superum sedes haliaeetos et qua
> candida concessos ascendet Ciris honores.

55 Cf. DL 10.127.

> [. . .] You, O forms once most beautiful,
> outpace the blue clouds in the bright air,
> where the new sea-hawk will ascend to the seats of the gods,
> and the shining Ciris to her vouchsafed honors.

The language of ascending to the thrones of the gods and to granted honors, both for Scylla and her father, hardly seems consonant with the metamorphosis considered as a punishment. Again, when Amphitrite decides to transform Scylla into a bird more beautiful than the swan, she has in mind not punishment, but pity (481–483):

> donec tale decus formae vexarier undis
> non tulit ac miseros mutavit virginis artus
> caeruleo pollens coniunx Neptunia regno.
>
> until Neptune's consort, mistress of the deep blue realm,
> would not bear that such a splendor of beauty should be tormented by the waves,
> and transformed the maiden's pitiable limbs.

Nevertheless, when the metamorphosis is complete, the author denounces Amphitrite's action as unworthy of her (508–509), calling Scylla an *infelix virgo nequiquam a morte recepta* (517) and describing Scylla's future life in bleak terms (510–513):

> numquam illam post haec oculi videre suorum
> purpureas flavo retinentem vertice vittas
> non thalamus Syrio fragrans accepit amomo
> nullae illam sedes: quid enim cum sedibus illi?
>
> Never henceforth did the eyes of her kinsmen behold her
> fastening the purple ribbons on her golden head,
> nor did a bridal chamber, fragrant with Syrian balsam, receive her,
> nor any house: for what was there for her among houses?

And she is not to have even this sad existence *poena sine* (520), for Jupiter, *commotus talem ad superos volitare puellam* (522), then transforms Nisus into the sea-eagle. Scylla's punishment is not complete until she is locked in chase with her father, because Jupiter himself saw an element of honor in her transformation, vain though it might have been as a substitute for death.

What are we to make of this ambiguity in the attitude of the poet and his characters toward the Ciris-transformation? Even if Lyne is right to attribute it to the contamination of the poet's source material,[56] it is still conceivable that the

56 Lyne 1978, 9–10.

poet might have made his choices with an ethical purpose in mind. In my view, the key lies in the Epicurean warning against the fear of death. Death should be nothing to an Epicurean sage, for long life can add nothing to pleasure thoroughly enjoyed and no one after death is sensible of what he has lost.[57] Amphitrite's decision to save Scylla was based on a false judgement of death as an evil, just as the choice of a beautiful form and the honor of flight (i.e. the ability to inhabit the gods' realm) are based on false ideas of what is good. For in the end, neither the avoidance of death nor the beauty and honor of her new form give Scylla any happiness. She is snatched from death in vain.

Especially poignant are lines 510–513, quoted above, where Scylla's loss of her human life is described. Lyne has attributed them to sources in Catullus and Propertius, but they are strikingly similar in sentiment to the words Lucretius puts in the mouths of people foolishly mourning death.[58] It is notable that these lines in the *Ciris* are written in reference not to Scylla's death but to her transformation. That is, where Lucretius' point is that the dead person will not be sensible of his loss, the transformed Scylla will be; death, therefore, would have been a greater kindness to her. Instead, as Bretzigheimer points out, both she and her father, through the false kindness of Amphitrite and Jupiter, are forced to live a miserable existence *ad saecula* (537).[59] Bretzigheimer reads even the honor and rebirth[60] given to Nisus as "acting ironically" and considers both metamorphoses to be pertinent to the Epicurean teaching on the preferability of death to a long life without pleasure.[61] In both cases, the god performing the transformation has falsely overestimated the value of long life and the evil of death.

Conclusions

The *Ciris* may not be a perfectly finished work of pure Epicurean poetry. Brezigheimer, though she sees it as a showpiece of Epicurean teaching, considers the work to stand between the worlds of poetry and philosophy.[62] The poet himself humbly makes a similar claim, when he reminds his patron that this long-promised poem is not the result only of his philosophical training but of his earlier traditional edu-

57 Cf. DL 10.124–126.

58 Lyne 1978, 309; Lucr. 3.894–898.

59 Bretzigheimer 2005, 221–222.

60 Rebirth because he is *pater exstinctus* (523) and Jupiter "gave back the wished-for life in a changed body" (*reddidit optatam mutato corpore vitam*, 527).

61 Cf. Lucr. 3.862–868.

62 Bretzigheimer 2005, 207.

cation as well. The use of traditional mythic content and poetic tropes, however, is not a mere inability of the author to renounce poetry – there is no reason to suppose that such an injunction was laid on him by his Epicurean education. Instead, the traditional poetic form allows him to teach his Epicurean moral lessons through the exempla of failure: Scylla's failure to be moderate in her obsessive love, Carme's failure as a friend to restrain and cure her, Nisus' overconfidence in his circumstances and the gods' false pity for death. This use of myth as moral fable is appropriate, not only to a young poet at the beginning of his philosophical career, but also to a patron of the arts who cares about wisdom but also holds a high social rank in the world. The *Ciris*, when interpreted in these terms, appears not, as some scholars have read it, as a failure both as poetry and as philosophy, but as a sophisticated example of the use of poetic tools for philosophical purposes.

Enrico Piergiacomi

Chapter 5
Volcanos and Roman Epicureanism: Traces of Epicurean Theory in the Poet of the *Aetna*

Mt. Aetna, the famous volcano in Sicily, was believed in antiquity to be the place where some divinities dwell and its eruptions were regarded as divine phenomena. It is not surprising, then, that Lucretius took an interest in the topic. In Book 6 of his *De rerum natura* he gives a non-mythical explanation of its eruptions (693–702), thus disproving that their origins lie in a *numen divinum* (54–67). But were there other Roman Epicureans who tried to "demythologize" Mt. Aetna? If one looks at the works of Demetrius Laco and Philodemus, the answer will be negative, for nowhere in their writings is there an interest in volcanic eruptions. A negative answer will also come from a consideration of Vergil and Horace, both of whom mention Mt. Aetna in their poetry[1] but refer only to the mythological tradition that Lucretius rejected.

Things change when one moves to the *Aetna* poem, preserved in the *Appendix Vergiliana* together with the *Ciris* and other poetic texts.[2] The *Aetna*'s authorship has been disputed ever since Joseph Scaliger, who in his 1573 edition casts doubt on its ascription to Vergil and attributed it instead, to Ovid's contemporary, Cornelius Severus: a hypothesis that today is no longer defended.[3] Other scholars have proposed that he could have been instead a Stoic,[4] or Seneca's friend Lucilius[5] or in any case a poet of the early Neronian age.[6] This chapter lends support to Rostagni's hypothesis that the *Aetna* might have been, if not a work of the young Vergil, then at least a work of one of his Epicurean friends from Naples.[7] This investigation argues that the work is deeply influenced by Epicureanism, which tries to es-

1 Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.5–8; *Epod.* 17.30–35; *Ars* 464–466; Verg. *G.* 1.471–473 and 4.170–178, *A.* 3.548–587, 3.670–682 and 8.416–441.

2 See Chapter 4 for details.

3 Scaliger 1573, 346–347. Cf. Blänsdorf 2011, 290.

4 So Munro 1867, 35–36; Sudhaus 1898, 58–72 and 101–103; Pascal 1905; Goodyear 1984, 352–355; Volk 2005, 78–82; Iodice 2013.

5 Sen. *Ep.* 79.5–7 (= Blänsdorf 2011, 311). *Contra* Munro 1867, 33–37; Sudhaus 1898, 81–82; Richter 1963, 2–4.

6 Sudhaus 1898, 83; Della Corte 1975, 70–73; Wolff 2002, 80.

7 Rostagni 1961, 310–334.

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tablish, along lines similar to those adopted in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, that a rational study of the volcanic eruption can lead to psychological well-being and can nullify all the false theological beliefs that hinder the tranquility of the soul.

In making a solid case for significant Epicurean influence a few words of caution are in order. An important study of Phillip De Lacy has demonstrated convincingly that finding simple parallels between *Aetna* and Epicurean or Stoic teachings is not per se a sign of its adherence to either philosophical school. Scholars who advocate the author's commitment to a particular philosophical school are consequently obliged to demonstrate that a specific passage of the poem conforms more closely to the basic principles of one sect than to those of another.[8] Following De Lacy's criteria I shall argue in favor of the Epicureanism of the *Aetna*, while explaining why proposed connections to other philosophical sects are demonstrably less cogent.

More specifically, the need for caution is made all the more important by the fact that, even if some parts of the *Aetna* may show strong evidence of Epicurean beliefs, others instead pose challenges to this supposition and attest to occasional divergences from the Lucretian exposition. In adjudicating this issue, it is important to bear in mind that the text was written by a poet who had no allegiance to a specific philosophical school and used philosophical thought as a source of inspiration. As a poet, therefore, the author was typically inclined to indulge in frequent "poetic license" (cf. the concept of "deliberate falsehood" below). An effort will be made, however, to show that these ostensible difficulties regarding philosophical affiliation can be successfully resolved and that the divergences from Lucretius do not necessarily imply that our poet abandons his strong Epicurean sympathies. If one challenges the idea that Epicureans were philosophers who did not debate each other,[9] the divergencies from Lucretius may be considered signs of alternate Epicurean explanations of why one should investigate Mt. Aetna's marvelous eruptions.

The Doctrine of the Detached Gods in the *Aetna*

As a point of departure let us examine the theology promulgated by the poet of the *Aetna*. His main belief is that gods are not responsible for the eruptions of the volcano. Indeed, he first challenges the truth of the poetic fables that associate

8 De Lacy 1943.

9 The idea has been refuted by recent scholarship, on which see Verde 2010 with references cited therein.

the cause of the phenomenon with the activity of Hephaestus, the Cyclopes and Typhon/Enceladus;[10] he then repudiates the notion that a divine entity pleads with the wind to assist it in its purpose (366–371). The poet, however, does not conclude from this fact that a divinity does not exist. Two passages of the *Aetna* will show the point clearly:[11]

> non est tam sordida divis
> cura neque extremas ius est demittere in artes
> sidera: subducto regnant sublimia caelo
> illa neque artificum curant tractare laborem
>
> No task so paltry have the gods. To meanest crafts one may not rightly lower the stars; their sway is royal, aloft in a remote heaven they care not to handle the toil of artisans (32–35).
>
> non est divinis tam sordida rebus egestas,
> nec parvas mendicat opes nec conrogat auras
>
> Such squalid poverty fits not things divine nor begs for mean supplies nor solicits doles of air (371–372).

These texts may be interpreted as suggesting that the poet believes in the existence of many gods (cf. *regnant* in 34) who live in heaven, but also that they are averse to activities that might hinder them from perfect bliss. The exercise of a sort of "metallurgic" art that generates the eruptions is included among these. Now, since the poet repeatedly claims that nature makes Mt. Aetna erupt by exercising an *ars* (188–190, 198, 600), it can be inferred that the gods in their heavenly abode are not responsible for the "art" that occasionally provokes bursts of lava from the volcano.

On these grounds it is plausible to connect this statement to Epicurus' claim that divinities live in the "spaces between worlds" (μετακόσμια) and are not involved in the government of this (or of any) world.[12] Therefore, they are not involved in the government of natural phenomena, because this would diminish their blessedness, majesty and perfection. What is more, since the poet of the *Aetna* removes from the gods only activities that are *sordida* and recognizes the existence of good arts (cf. *bonis artibus* in 270), he obviously assumes that divine beings practice in heaven only actions compatible with their blessed nature.[13] Al-

10 Cf. 29–73 and Leroux 2002 for a reconstruction of this poetical/superstitious tradition.

11 The edition is that of Goodyear 1965 and the translation of Duff/Duff 1934, modified.

12 E.g. Vesserau 1923, xxiv–xxv; Rostagni 1961, 294–295; Verde 2022, 13.

13 Cf. *Hdt.* 76–77, *Pyth.* 98 and 113; Lucr. 5.595–634, the texts collected in frr. 381–383, Us. 1887; Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.8.19–9.23. For other references, cf. Gigandet 1998, 73–124 and 169–204; Essler 2011,

though the text does not state this tenet explicitly it is quite reasonable to infer that the poet concurs with those Epicureans who argue that gods dwelling in the μετακόσμια converse with each other, eat or have sex.[14]

A potential problem with this interpretation is raised by the word *sidera* (34). According especially to H. A. J. Munro,[15] this seems to show that the gods in which the poet of the *Aetna* believes are the stars that run high up in heaven, not the anthropomorphic deities recognized by Epicurus (cf. the scholium to KD 1). Other passages of the poem may be quoted to sustain the correlation between *divus* and *sidus*/*astrum*: 43–45, 51–53, 68–70, as well as 230–251, where the poet gives to some stars the names of gods (Mars, Saturn etc.). Even defenders of the Epicurean affiliation are puzzled by this nomenclature,[16] with the result that they come to the conclusion that the poet may be committed instead to the astral theology of Stoicism.[17]

The incompatibility may be illusory. The advocates of Stoic influence could argue that the poet might have shared the view of a "milder" Stoic like Seneca, who believed in the providential care of God, conceived as the mind of the universe and the totality of the cosmos (*QNat.* 1.pr.13, 2.32.3, 2.36, 2.45–46, 5.18, 7.30.3–6), yet claimed in the *Naturales Quaestiones* that some phenomena have "human causes" and therefore have their ultimate origin in divinity though not directly caused by it (cf. 2.32.3–4 and 6.3.1). This opens up the possibility of explaining such phenomena in secular terms, purely scientific or even mechanistic theories.

Conversely, those who defend Epicurean influence may point out that the identification of gods as stars is not as evident in the text as Munro believes. The same verses that are invoked to prove that *divus* and *sidus*/*astrum* are synonymous may also be used to show that these terms indicate different entities. Gods and stars both dwell in heaven, but they do not coincide; otherwise, the poet would have explicitly identified this relationship at least once. The passages that ascribe to the planets names of divinities like Mars and Saturn (230–251) may simply reflect common usage, which an Epicurean respects (cf. *Hdt.* 37). Lucretius

235–331; Piergiacomi 2017, 152–162. But cf. also Sen. *QNat.* 1.3, who rejects all opinions that imply god's *diminutio* of their majesty, and Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.94–101, who declares that natural phenomena – in this case spontaneous fire on an altar – have nothing to do with the gods that live eternally in peace (cf. 101: *namque deos didici securum agere aevom*).

14 Cf. coll. 10–15 of Philodemus' Book 3 of the *De dis*. For further details, cf. Essler 2011, 171–174 and Piergiacomi 2017, 141–151, 162–172, 209–224.

15 Munro 1867, 35, 45, 57–58; cf. also Iodice 2002, 148–149.

16 Rostagni 1961, 307.

17 E.g. Cic. *Nat.* 1.15.32 and *Luc.* 40.126–41.128, Posidon. fr. 128, ed. Edelstein/Kidd 1972 (= Ach. Tat. 10).

himself conforms to this practice in his digression on the cycle of the seasons (5.737–745). Even today we still give to celestial bodies names of ancient Greek gods without committing ourselves to astral theology. As regards verses 32–35, moreover, it is a valid assumption that the poet is saying that gods do not use the stars as tools for governing the universe (hence, for causing Aetna's eruptions). This interpretation agrees with Epicurus' teachings, which deny that celestial movements are organized by divine beings (*Hdt.* 76).

Furthermore, a different interpretation of *subducto caelo* (34) supports the reading of the Epicurean influence. John Duff and Arnold Duff translate the phrase as "aloft in a remote heaven," which is an accurate translation in so far as it shows that gods live not simply in the sky immediately above, but in the highest recesses of the universe. So the verb *subducere* indicates here, as in Lucretius (cf. 1.1106), something that is "removed" from the senses. If one accepts this interpretation, then, it follows that stars cannot be identified with divine beings, since they do not completely escape our gazes. Human beings use their movements to navigate the seas and to perform other activities, as the poet of the *Aetna* recognizes (244–245), whereas Epicurean gods in their *intermundia* are invisible, both because they are far removed from our world and possess so subtle an atomic structure as to escape sensation (Lucr. 5.146–154). They are better candidates, then, for the godly living beings that dwell "aloft in a remote heaven."

Finally, the difficulty presented by the term *divus* may be explained by the hypothesis that here the author of the *Aetna* is employing poetic license, as occurs also in Lucretius. As it is well known, the latter begins his *De rerum natura* with a hymn to Venus (1.1–43), without implying that a deity conceived in is directly responsible for pleasure, love and peace.

In light of this observation, it is plausible to infer that the author of the *Aetna* was, to a significant degree, influenced by Epicurean thought, though perhaps not exclusively so. The belief in detached gods was indeed widespread among skeptical thinkers who were far more ancient than Epicurus (cf. Pl. *Leg.* 10.899d–900d). Furthermore, even Peripatetics argued that gods do not cause terrestrial phenomena, but rather engage in in purely intellectual activities such as contemplation (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 10.1178b). The Platonic Atticus was, for example, aware of the similarity between the Epicurean and Peripatetic perspectives in this regard, while also holding that Epicurus is arguably less impious than Aristotle.[18]

One can counter the objection, however, by noting that the popular belief in detached gods is fueled by the observation that bad men prosper and good ones

18 Cf. Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 15.5.4–14 (= fr. 3 des Places 1977) and especially Verde, *infra*, Chapter 6, § 3.

face misfortune. Epicurus' ideas are grounded, instead, in the ontological argument that the government of the world implies a divine *diminutio*. Since the poet of the *Aetna* does not employ moral reasons, but ontological ones, it is more probable that he refers to the Epicurean version of the theory. As for the hypothesis of Peripatetic influence, it is noteworthy that Aristotle believed that the divine unmoved mover could indirectly influence terrestrial phenomena by starting the motion of the stars, which in turn moves everything else (cf. *Metaph.* 9.1050b, 12.1072b). This theory is absent from the *Aetna*. One may conclude, therefore, that verses 32–35 and 370–371 offer evidence of Epicurean sympathies, although a comparable interest in other philosophical movements cannot be entirely discounted.

Allegory, Metaphors and Falsehood in the *Aetna*

The argument that privileges Epicurean conceptions developed above meets, however, with another difficulty. The belief in detached gods may appear to conflict with the claim that nature shows an *ars* while producing volcanic eruptions. Such art is regarded as a form of spontaneous metallurgy (cf. the references to smiths and anvils in 197–198 and 560–564) and may also be identifiable with divine agency (*divina cura*) (194–196). This idea seems to present the world as a living being, if not as a divinity that is responsible for natural phenomena – a thesis that was embraced by most Stoics.[19] Possible confirmation of this may be derived from all the verses of the *Aetna* that seem to attribute animated features to the volcano (possession of veins, voice and a "frenzied rage": 98–101, 120–122, 273–274, 481) or to winds (wrath and hostility: 147, 286) or to fire (cf. the image of military submission to winds in 218) or to stones, which are compared with sheep that go to pasture and to an army defeated by the assault of lava (366–368, 450–454, 469–477).

The question arises: can this apparent contradiction be resolved without necessarily implying a contamination of Epicureanism with Stoic elements?[20] The answer may be affirmative, provided that readers abandon two tacit premises which create the above difficulty: 1) an Epicurean could never recognize an *ars* in nature; 2) the expression *divina cura* and the attribution of animated features to Mt. Aetna and other phenomena imply necessarily the belief in the existence of a divinity that coincides with the world.

19 Cf. e.g. those quoted in DL 7.139 and 148, as well Man. 1.247–254, 1.482–493, 2.60–66. I write "most," because at least Aristo of Chios believed that it is impossible to demonstrate whether a god exists and is a living being (Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.14.37 = *SVF* 1.378).

20 This is the solution proposed by Rostagni 1961, 303–310 and De Lacy 1943, 177–178.

The first premise is invalidated by a parallel with a passage in the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda. He recognizes in φύσις a demiurgic wisdom while rejecting providence and the identification of a world-god.[21] Diogenes adheres to the view that our cosmos is well-ordered by atoms and void alone. Therefore, when the *Aetna* acknowledges that an *ars* is responsible for the eruptions, it may – like the Diogenes text – conceive of a "demiurgic" wisdom that is the product of φύσις itself.

The second premise is more difficult to challenge, since some of the animated features that the *Aetna* attributes to natural entities were actually employed by Stoics in obedience to their identification of the world with a divine, living being.[22] Once again, however, even these images may also be understood within a primarily Epicurean framework. Part of this framework consists in the fact that both Epicurus and Lucretius used analogies involving living beings in order to understand natural phenomena. The former does so in his description of the birth of the first human beings, who were nurtured by the "womb" of the earth, as well as in his comparison of the world to an animal or plant.[23] The latter uses analogies with living beings in many instances,[24] but also in his etiology of volcanic activity (6.639–669). Indeed, he argues that, just as we see that harmful atoms coming from the outside can cause an internal, bodily illness that, in turn, will cause the "eruptions" of feverish inflammations, so Mt. Aetna's bursts are provoked by the introduction of wind from the outside (6.696–700).[25] Neither Epicurus nor Lucretius, however, draws from these analogies in order to infer that the world is animated. If the author of the *Aetna* was familiar with these Epicurean modes of argument, he may similarly have used references to living beings as heuristic devices.

Book 2 of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* may substantiate this point with regard to its reflections on poetic allegory (652–660). Scholars debate whether this passage condemns the practice or allows it providing that one is careful not to draw from allegorical expressions some superstitious beliefs.[26] This study supports the latter hypothesis, since Lucretius often has recourse to moral or physical allegories in his poetry. Two cogent examples may be adduced. The first is the allegorical interpretation of the *Magna Mater* myth, which Lucretius interprets as a

21 Cf. NF 155 of Hammerstaed/Smith 2014 with Erler 2017; Verde 2017a.

22 Cf., e.g., Sen. *QNat.* 3.15, 6.3.1, 6.14, 6.18.6–7, 6.24, with Garani 2009, 105–108.

23 Frr. 305 (= Aët. 2.4.10) and 333 (= Censorinus *DN* 4.9), Us. 1887. The womb of the earth is also a metaphor of Lucretius; cf. Garani 2007, 81–93.

24 The whole book of Garani 2007 gives definitive evidence.

25 Bailey 1947, 1651; Giussani 1898, 243–249; Guittard 2002, 263–264; Garani 2007, 133–141.

26 Cf. i.a. Schrijvers 1970, 50–60; Garani 2007, 32; Taub 2008, 42.

reference to the earth as containing a mixture of generating seeds of all things, including the *corpora* that produce Mt. Aetna's eruptions (2.581–599). Another is the description of the "war" of the elements, which the poet does not intend to be taken literally by attributing to them the desire for conflict, since the atoms themselves, as conceived by Epicureans, have no emotions.[27]

It seems highly plausible, then, that the *Aetna* may follow Lucretius in attributing animation or emotions to phenomena with an allegorical meaning. It could speak of the wrath and the hostility of Mt. Aetna or the natural elements in order to underscore the violence of their actions.[28] The same may be said of the description of nature as a smith that occurs in 197–198 and 560–564, which could be read as an allegorical rationalization of the myth of the Cyclopes refuted at the beginning (36–40). There are no such monsters that cause eruptions while working in a furnace, for nature alone is the smith that provokes such phenomena by molding itself.

It remains to explain why the epithet *divina* for the *cura* exercised by nature does not necessarily imply a belief in a providential divinity. The terms "divine" and "sacred" (187b, 272–273, 464) are to be understood as synonyms of the marvelous organization of nature, which comes to the fore in the study of Mt. Aetna's eruptions (cf. § 5). This claim also agrees with Latin usage, which often attributes to *divinus* the meaning of "excellent" or "admirable."[29]

Further evidence of the poem's employment of allegorical description can be derived by looking at its account of poetic/rhetorical practice (74–93). This claims that intrinsic features of poetic discourse are its license (*licentia*) and freedom (*libertas*) of expression, which is the reason why poets often tell many falsehoods about the gods. This belief can be traced back at least to Hesiod, who explicitly recognized that the Muses often tell false things mixed with true ones (*Theog.* 27) and may have influenced both the *Aetna* and Lucretius.[30] On this model, the poet of the *Aetna* may be thought to exercise a conventional form of *licentia* and *libertas* in mixing science with mythology.[31] In this sense, metaphorical expressions involving the attribution of emotions and intentionality to external phenomena

27 Cf. 5.380–415 with Gigandet 1998, 315–332 and Garani 2007, 61–69.

28 Volk 2005, 79–80 and Garani 2009, 107–117 argue similarly that this imagery is a rational demythologization of the Gigantomachy refuted in verses 29–73. On the poetic representations of the *Aetna*, cf. more generally Wolff 2002, 81–84.

29 Goodyear 1984, 357, n. 42: "perhaps *divinus* [. . .] is fast degenerating into a vague expression of admiration or compliment."

30 On the Hesiodic influence, cf. recently Gale 2013.

31 I agree here with Goodyear 1984, 356 and Pingoud 2008.

may be regarded as examples of the convention of "deliberate falsehood" on the part of other poets.

The composer of the *Aetna* claims that his mission consists in expressing only the truth about the volcano (91–93). He sometimes, however, appears to disregard this same principle. An example occurs in the excursus on the Gigantomachy (41–73), which debunks its mythological content while retaining its poetic charm.[32] He also disregards his truth-principle in two other passages: (1) in 203–207, where he sings that Zeus looks at volcanic eruptions from above with marvel/fear, and (2) in the *miranda fabula* of 605–645: the tale of Amphinomous and his brothers, who were spared by gods during Mt. Aetna's violent eruption because in their flight they slowed down to save their parents.[33] Both digressions must be considered forms of "deliberate falsehood," since they express the same mythological content that was earlier refuted in 32–93.

Ethical Significance of the *Aetna*

The poet of the *Aetna* emphasizes the ethical goal of his creation in 147–281. He claims that scientific research represents the true wealth of human beings or the art that enriches us the most (270–271). In contrast to mining and agriculture, which give us gold, silver and nutriment at the expense of our well-being (206), science offers many gains of superior importance. These include the pleasure of our souls (250), the acquisition of a divine *status* or becoming akin to the stars (251–253), the elimination of our fears regarding the sounds emitted by Mt. Aetna's eruptions (275) and the removal of false theological beliefs, such as the wrath of celestial gods (279). All of these gains resonate with the benefits accruing to Epicurean *ratio* as articulated by Lucretius.

Since he stresses the moral relevance of his investigation, the author of the *Aetna* differs clearly from ancient Peripatetics. Aristotle and his pupils never praise the power of investigation of natural phenomena to procure well-being or true wealth; rather their belief is that ethics and physics are different domains of knowledge, so the latter is not necessary for improving our understanding of the former (cf. Arist. *Metaph.* 1.982b, 2.993b, 6.1026a). Our poet is also different from Cornelius Severus and Valgius Rufus, who – as far as we can judge from the evi-

32 Effe 1977, 209–219; Innes 1979, 178; De Vivo 1992, 678 and n. 27.

33 On the legend and its sources, cf. Santelia 2012. The *miranda fabula* may be also considered an example of a good allegorical fable that aims at didactic instruction: cf. Taub 2008, 55; Santelia 2012, 43–45.

dence – studied the *Aetna* just for the sake of knowledge.[34] On the other hand, three other Roman poets did link their explanation of the phenomena with moral improvement. The first is Lucretius. He indeed follows Epicurus' conception of nature in order to remove the mythological fear to which Mt. Aetna's volcanic eruptions give rise (6.68–91, 6.645–646). Moreover, he claims that such knowledge offers a divine status that makes us equal to heaven[35] and gives pleasure and implicitly true wealth, because it offers the tranquility of the soul that the excessive greed for money precludes (3.1–33, 6.9–42). Next comes Ovid, who in the discourse of Pythagoras contained in Book 15 of his *Metamorphoses* gives some interesting arguments as to why Aetna will not burn forever (340–355; for parallels, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 75.2 and Strab. 6.2.8), with the aim of removing the fear of death and destroying the impious custom of sacrificing animals (75–175). This episode could be regarded as furnishing moral instruction, because it challenges superstition and promotes human flourishing. Finally, there is Manilius, the main adversary and one of the most carefully imitated poetic models of the *Aetna*.[36] Although he only incidentally mentions Mt. Aetna and volcanoes (1.101, 1.854, 2.880), he nonetheless follows in the footsteps of Stoics who claimed that natural investigation imparts tranquility, virtuous improvement, likeness to god, true wealth, the removal of superstition and of the lust for wealth.[37] It is worth noting, furthermore, that Manilius praises all these benefits in his moral digressions (cf. 1.73–91, 4.1–21, 4.393–410, 4.924–928).

While these texts suggest that our poet could have derived his moral motivation equally from Lucretius, Ovid and/or Manilius, there is a significant detail that makes the fundamental affiliation with the Lucretian perspective more plausible. Verse 250 of the *Aetna* establishes that knowledge of phenomena offers a *divina animi ac iucunda voluptas*. This expression is an unmistakable nod to of many expressions that Lucretius uses in his poem (2.1–13, 2.172, 5.144), prominent among which is the phrase: *divina voluptas atque horror* (3.28–30).[38] Although pleasure is the central goal of Epicureans (cf. e.g. *Men.* 128), Ovid never mentions it in Book 15 of his *Metamorphoses*, nor do Manilius or the Stoics ever consider it

34 On the second poet, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 51.1 (= fr. 7 Bl.). He is mentioned here together with Messalla Corvinus – see Cornell 2013, 61 n. 5.

35 Cf. 1.64–79 and 5.6–44. On the assimilation to god in Epicureanism, cf. Erler 2002b.

36 Lühr 1971.

37 See Posidon. frr. 186 (= Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.21.129.1–5) and 240a (= Ath. 6.1), ed. Edelstein/Kidd 1972, and of Sen. *QNat.* 1. 6–12, 2.59, 6.1–3, 6.4.2, 6.32.

38 3.28–30. On this topic, cf. Schrijvers 1970, 88, 197, 340 and Piergiacomi 2022a.

a good.[39] And while it is true that Seneca suggests that the study of nature *iuvat* and *delectat* (cf. *QNat.* 1. 7 and 1.12), these verbs may just signify contentment, as opposed to an Epicurean conception of *voluptas*. What is more, in the *Naturales Quaestiones* Seneca employs the term *voluptas* only once with a positive meaning (5.12.2), but twice in a pejorative sense to indicate the vicious behavior of Hostius Quadra and fools (1.16.1, 4a. 2).

The idea of the pleasure attendant upon scientific investigation as expressed in *Aetna* 147–281 is therefore a strong indication that the author is an Epicurean sympathizer.[40] Even if the references to being similar to a god, true wealth and the removal of superstition might have been derived from similar sentiments attested in Ovid or a Stoic like Manilius, the point that knowledge of nature bestows the *summum bonum* of pleasure constitutes a paramount premise of Epicurean doctrine.

The Explanation Itself: Two Epicurean Theories Combined?

The primary philosophical source of the poem's explanation of the cause of Mt. Aetna's eruptions may now be identified with a high degree of probability. The Epicurean theory regarding the etiology of volcanoes comes from Book 6 of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (682–700). The train of thought is the following: (1) Mt. Aetna is mostly empty and contains air, which becomes wind if agitated; (2) wind somehow grows hot and, in turn, warms up the earth and the stones of the volcano, which are ejected through external jaws; (3) sea caverns contribute to the phenomenon because they grant wind access to Mt. Aetna.

Lucretius' description leaves a few expository gaps. For instance, it does not explain why air is agitated and becomes wind,[41] nor how wind grows successively hot, although it could be supposed that the reason is either its own movement or

39 Wolfsdorf 2013, 182–213. Manilius only says that the influence of the stars renders particular individuals more prone to pleasure and that *voluptas* is mainly sought out by animals (4.152–155, 4.510–514, 4.897–900, 5.110–114, 5.266–267).

40 Cf. also De Lacy 1943, 174–175; Rostagni 1961, 290–293; Giuliese 2001, 115–116. *Contra* Taub 2008, 48.

41 This phenomenon is also mentioned but not explained earlier in the poem (3.282–305, 6.364–367, 6.577–579). For literary antecedents to Epicurus' explanation, cf. *Pyth.* 100 and 105, along with Verde 2022, 171–181. On Lucretius' exposition of the theory, cf. Guittard 2002, 268–269; Verde 2018, 524–531; Verde 2020, 95–96.

its contact with Mt. Aetna's fire (cf. the passage on the etiology of thunder in 6.274–284). Nonetheless, Lucretius offers an easy-to-master explanation of volcanic activity that, on the one hand, rejects completely any mythological causation (cf., *Pyth.* 104) and, on the other hand, establishes that wind is the active cause of the phenomenon – another key point of Epicurean meteorology.[42]

A careful analysis of this passage of the *De rerum natura* reveals not only that there are major similarities between the Lucretian theory and that of the poet of the *Aetna*, but also differences. It is useful to quote the summary of causation factors that the latter gives in 556–567:

> terra foraminibus vires trahit, urget in artum
> spiritus, incendi vis it per maxima saxa
>
> the earth draws in forces through her perforations; volcanic spirit compresses these into narrow space, and the path of conflagration lies through the mightiest rocks.

Verse 567 gives an explanation that agrees with Lucretius' account. When the poet talks of a "spirit" that compresses the "forces" drawn from outside and makes rocks burst into flame, he is referring to nothing more than the wind that warms up the earth and makes it burst outside (146–157, 199–218). He differs from Lucretius only in points of detail. He adds that wind warms the stones because it blows in a narrow space (168, 182) and prefers to call *spiritus* the *ventus* (*aër* continues to mean "non-agitated air," as at 213).

Verse 566, however, offers a somewhat different explanation. The poet affirms that wind is "sucked in" through cavities on the surface of the earth or produced inside its caverns due to the collapse of subterranean rocks and a sort of mist (282–357).[43] Sea caverns, in particular, which provide the key entrances for winds in Lucretius are not mentioned.

Nevertheless, these two differences need not be interpreted as non-Epicurean explanatory elements. Indeed, the causes invoked by the *Aetna* are used by both Epicurus (*Pyth.* 105–106, fr. 351, ed. Us. 1887 = Sen. *QNat.* 6.20.5–7) and Lucretius (6.535–607) in their investigation of the causes of earthquakes.[44] At verse 287, moreover, our poet says that Mt. Aetna admits winds from every side. Presumably, then, they could also enter through sea caverns, whose existence may therefore be taken as implicit.[45] It appears to be the case that *Aetna* combines two

42 Cf. Leone 2015.

43 Della Corte 1975, 74–78; Verde 2018, 238–242.

44 Cf. here Bailey 1947, 1633–1645; Della Corte 1975, 82–84; Smolenaars 2005, 320–323; Garani 2009, 114–117.

45 The poet is aware that Mt. Aetna is surrounded by water (v. 95). Cf. Pascal 1905, 157.

complementary explanations that Lucretius treats separately: those regarding the causes of earthquakes and those accounting for of volcanic eruptions. If this is the case,[46] one could conclude that *Aetna* appears to be following in the footsteps of Anaxagoras (59 A 89, ed. Diels/Kranz 1956 = Sen. *QNat.* 6.9.1), Aristotle (*Mete.* 2.367a-b), Timaeus the historian[47] and Posidonius,[48] according to whom a volcanic eruption may be caused by earthquakes.

It is important to emphasize that the poet's adoption of contributions of other philosophical schools in expounding his own updated version of Lucretius' theory is accepted practice in Epicurean methodology. One of the most original doctrines of Epicurus is to be found in the method of multiple explanations (πλεοναχὸς τρόπος), which consists in the idea that phenomena can have different explanations based upon experience. Hence, an Epicurean may accept etiological interpretations that, in agreement with this principle, come from different schools or authors. The incorporation of the causes of earthquakes into the etiology of volcanic eruptions could accordingly be read as a species of πλεοναχὸς τρόπος.[49] More generally, Epicureans were historically open to accepting observations derived from other philosophical schools or doctrines, provided that they were deemed useful and therefore conducive to attaining the goal of well-being.[50] In conclusion, a presumptive Epicurean sympathizer, such as the poet of the *Aetna*, may legitimately admit multiple explanations for volcanic activity that comprise those provided by Lucretius as well as those offered by philosophical rivals.

Marvelous Aetna

The difference in viewpoint between the author of the *Aetna* and Lucretius highlighted above is not the only one that can be identified. The two poets also

46 So Bakker 2016, 119. There is always the possibility that Lucretius' original plan was to investigate earthquakes and volcanic eruptions together, so that the passage on the constant size of the sea (6.608–638), which separates the two phenomena, is out of place; cf. Bailey 1947, 1646 and Rostagni 1961, 284–287.

47 Cf. Strab. 5.4.9 = fr. 58, ed. Champion 2017.

48 Cf. fr. 231 Edelstein/Kidd 1972 (= Strab. 1.3.16), Edelsten/Kidd 1988, 811–812, 822–823, Sen. *QNat.* 6.4.1.

49 I follow Verde 2013; Verde 2018a, 532–543; Bakker 2016; Verde 2020, 84–97; 13–76. On the use of multiple explanations in the *Aetna*, cf. also Rostagni 1961, 298; Lassandro 1993, 326–328; Taub 2008, 49–51.

50 Cf., e.g., Epicurus' *De natura* Book 14 (coll. 40–41, ed. Leone 1984) and Philodemus' *De oeconomia* (col. 27, ed. Tsouna 2012).

conceive the role of wonder in the quest for natural knowledge in divergent ways. Lucretius clearly states that the rational explanation for Mt. Aetna's eruptions (cf. 1.722–730) will bring scholars of nature to an absence of wonder (6.653–669). Such an invitation to this eventual "lack of wonder" or ἀθαυμαστία appears elsewhere in Lucretius, who often makes recourse to the formula *nimirum* before explaining phenomena, or claims that there is no wonderful phenomenon that does not become plain and comprehensible, if we are trained to use our intellect well.[51] In turn, the author of the *Aetna* follows here an established tradition that was started by Democritus (cf. Strabo 1.3.21 = 68 A 168, ed. Diels/Kranz 1956) and continued by the Peripatetics, who claim that our initial marvel at natural phenomena is dispelled by the acquired knowledge of their causes[52] and then developed by the Greek Stoics,[53] who might therefore be one of their polemic targets.

Conversely, although the author of the *Aetna* agrees with Lucretius' repeated statement that it is foolish to marvel about certain phenomena (132–135, 457–460, 535–564), he disagrees with him when he asserts that initial wonder should be removed completely. In the opinion of the former, both Mt. Aetna's eruptions and lava stones are marvelous or sacred (155–157, 180, 198, 398–428), so one must contemplate with reason these holy marvels, thus obtaining the tranquility and *voluptas* which is the ultimate goal of the inquirer (224–227, 247–253). The world appears in this way as a *spectaculum* (156, 384, 448–449, 601), which is terrifying for those who cannot recognize its true causes but pleasurable for those who can. Many wander throughout the inhabited earth in order to see the places in which marvelous cities were settled or marvelous events occurred: but nothing is more spectacular than what nature generates through its ingenious *ars*.[54] The poet of the *Aetna* does not then believe that knowledge of phenomena dismisses wonder.

51 Cf., e.g., 1.666–669; 2.464–465, 1024–1047; 3.538–539; 4.370–375, 462–468, 590–602; 5.97–104; 6.58–71, 185–186, 850–853; Hor. *Epist.* 1.6.1 (*Nil admirari*). On the topic, cf. Gigandet 1998, 333–357 and Guittard 2002, 262.

52 Aristotle claimed indeed that everything shows something marvelous (*Part. an.* 1.645a) and that wisdom begins from the sentiment of wonder (*Metaph.* 1.982b; but cf. already Pl. *Grg.* 458e and *Tht.* 155c-d). He affirms, however, that those who achieve knowledge will not marvel anymore (*Metaph.* 1.983a).

53 Zen. *SVF* 1.239 (= Ath. 6.23); Chrysipp. *SVF* 3.411 (= Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.8.37.5); Man. 1.96–105. But cf. especially DL 7.123 (= *SVF* 3.642), where it is stated that the Stoic sage will not marvel while contemplating volcanic eruptions.

54 Cf. 568–601 and Volk 2005, 88–90. Iodice 2002, 173–174 evinces here a parallel with the attack of Lucr. 3.1058–1059 on those who always move from place to place (*semper* | *commutare locum*). The *topos* also occurs in Man. 4.398–407.

On the contrary, it nurtures this sentiment and educates one to cultivate it rightly.

Since this difference from Lucretius' view regarding wonder has been considered non-trivial by some scholars,[55] it would be tempting to hypothesize that the author of the *Aetna* challenges the Epicurean poet and, more generally, earlier natural philosophers on the subject. In this respect, his position might be compared to that of Seneca, who also believed that nature is a marvelous *spectaculum* for its observers.[56] The latter also distanced himself here from the influence of Greek, as opposed to Roman, Stoicism.[57] By the same token, the poet of the *Aetna* may have been disinclined to scrupulously follow Epicureanism in every respect.

The role of wonder in relation to enlightenment as articulated in the *Aetna* is not, in my view, irreconcilable with that espoused in the *De rerum natura*. In admiring the eruptions, the Aetna-poet may be showing his appreciation either for the above-mentioned method of the πλεοναχὸς τρόπος that allows one to analyze the volcano from multiple perspectives,[58] or for the Epicurean *ratio* that reveals nature's secrets. If so, it could be argued that the author of the *Aetna* does something similar to what we find in Lucretius, who occasionally has recourse to the technique of indirect amplification. Indeed, he uses eruptions as a starting point for praising Epicurus' reasoning, which reveals the magnitude and greatness of the universe.[59]

This reading may be further supported by the observation that Epicureans do not dismiss all *spectacula* and species of "marvels" (θαύματα). Lucretius speaks of a *spectaculum* full of *iucunda voluptas* in the famous comparison of the fools' unfortunate situation with the *templa serena* granted by Epicurean *doctrina* (2.1–19); and Philodemus attests that there is one thing that deserves θαῦμα even after its acquisition, namely philosophy, capable of procuring pleasures that make life enjoyable.[60] The poet of the *Aetna* might add that the contemplation of the eruptions is a good *spectaculum* that merits wonder even after the discovery of their causes. He makes the noteworthy suggestion that seeing a volcano raging from an ele-

55 Della Corte 1975, 88; Effe 1977, 209–210; Giuliese 2001, 116; Volk 2005, 81.

56 Cf. *Ot.* 5.2–3, *Ben.* 4.23.1–4, *Marc.* 18, *Helv.* 8.6, *Pol.* 9.3, *QNat.* 1. 12 and 7.1, *Ep.* 65.16, 89.1, 90.28.

57 It could indeed be an original characterization of Roman Stoicism. Cf. Balbus *ap.* Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.40.103–104, 46.140, 62.155; Man. 1.478–482.

58 This suggestion comes from the first anonymous reviewer of the early draft of this chapter, to whom I am grateful.

59 Schrijvers 1970, 193–194 and 262–266. I would like to thank the second anonymous reviewer of the early draft of this chapter for this interesting suggestion.

60 *De divitiis* 1.58.26–30, ed. Tepedino Guerra 1978; *De morte* 4.17.32–18.9, ed. Henry 2009. On Lucr. 2.1–13, I agree with the interpretation of Holtsmark 1967.

vated safe place grants the *iucunda voluptas* praised in the proem of Book 2 of the *De rerum natura*.[61] In short, Mt. Aetna's eruptions continue to attract wonder in the observer because knowledge of their cause is a source of philosophical pleasure. This comparison with the Lucretian proem buttresses the argument in favor of the primarily Epicurean orientation of the *Aetna*.

61 Cf. here 247–250 with 464–465. The allusion to Lucretius' passage was already noted by Vesserau 1923, 66. Our poet might employ here the technique of *oppositio in imitando*, which is used in other parts of the poem. cf. De Vivo 1992, 667–670.

Francesco Verde

Chapter 6
Epicurus in the Roman Imperial Age: Four Case-Studies (Aristocles of Messene, Atticus, Dionysius of Alexandria and Plotinus)

Introduction

Although there are a few excellent overviews of Epicurean thought in the Roman Imperial age, there is, to my knowledge, no comprehensive study of the history of Imperial Epicureanism in relation to the other contemporary philosophical schools.[1] This lack of a nuanced *Wirkungsgeschichte* has often created a false impression of discontinuity, which in all likelihood does not correspond to the historical reality. Although we do not know whether the Garden, the school founded by Epicurus at Athens, continued to exist in the Imperial age or had been re-founded over time, we know for certain that Epicurus' doctrines circulated widely in the various philosophical schools of that era. It remains difficult nonetheless to determine whether every thinker who quotes Epicurus directly or indirectly actually read his works first hand. It has been suggested, for example, that Epicurus' fundamental work devoted to the science of nature (φυσιολογία), the *De natura* in 37 books, which is partially preserved in the Herculaneum papyri, did not achieve significant diffusion beyond the confines of the Epicurean school.[2] We cannot, however, confirm this suggestion, since the few quotations from the *De natura* by non-Epicurean authors (e.g. Diogenes Laertius, Arrian, Alciphron and Galen)[3] do not necessarily indicate that Epicurus' capital work failed to have a wider circulation. The *De natura*, however, is manifestly a very difficult work, and undoubtedly the intense aversion to Epicureanism on the part of both pagan ancient philosophers

1 See on this topic the excellent overviews provided by Erler 2009, Dorandi 2016 and Erler 2018.
2 Dorandi 2015, 44–48.
3 Us. 1887, 124.

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and the Church Fathers impeded broad dissemination of the major works of the founder of the Garden.

Among the clearest indications of the extent of Imperial reception of the school we may cite the following: in the Hadrianic era there was a quasi-revival of Epicureanism as documented in two inscriptions that confirm the vivid interest of Plotina, Trajan's widow, in the Epicurean school of Athens.[4] A later event that cannot be ignored in the examination of Imperial Epicureanism is the institution in Athens by Marcus Aurelius at public expense around 176 CE of several chairs of philosophy, one of which was devoted to Epicurean thought.[5] A recently edited papyrus fragment (*POxy*. 5077[6]) perhaps indicates the existence of a sort of "anthology" of letters written by Epicurus (and/or the Epicureans) that attests the circulation of these texts (at least in Egypt) between the first and second centuries CE. One can find discussions of, and references to, several Epicurean doctrines in many authors of the Imperial age, such as Plutarch,[7] Sextus Empiricus,[8] Galen,[9] Alexander of Aphrodisias[10] and Diogenianus.[11] In his presentation of Epicurean philosophy in Book 10 of his *Vitae Philosophorum*, Diogenes Laertius appears to be a committed apologist of his doctrines.[12] As is well known, Diogenes transmits Epicurus' three doctrinal letters, the *Ratae sententiae* (called "the most beautiful of books", by Lucian of Samosata *Alex*. 47 = 70 Us.), and the *Testamentum*, works that, *ipso facto*, were in circulation in addition to other Epicurean compendia/summaries or "anthologies." Finally, the extensive monumental epigraph of Diogenes of Oinoanda – indisputably the most important and influential Epicurean philosopher of the Imperial age – is an absolutely indispensable source for the history of Epicureanism and its relationship to other philosophical schools.[13]

In reassessing the extent and scope of the diffusion of Epicurean philosophy in the Imperial age, my analysis will focus on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Epicureanism from the late Republican age to the third century CE. Given the impossibility, within the limited scope of this chapter, of providing a thorough account of the influential presence of Epicurean thought over so wide a period, I will target my examination

4 Dorandi 2016, 30–37.

5 See Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 566; further passages in Todd 1976, 6 n. 29; Donini 1981; Toulouse 2008.

6 Obbink/Schorn 2011; see too Dorandi 2016, 40–48 and especially the remarkable study by Angeli 2013, including a new edition and exegesis of this text.

7 Boulogne 2003 and Corti 2014, 21–28.

8 Spinelli 1991.

9 Kaufman 2014, 284–289.; Damiani 2023.

10 Verde 2015a, 187; Verde 2015b; Verde 2016c.

11 This, however, is a much-debated point. See Isnardi 1990 and Hammerstaedt 1993.

12 Dorandi 2016, 37–40.

13 For Diogenes of Oinoanda, see the new important volume edited by Hammerstaedt *et al*. 2017.

on four "case-studies," which, in my view, are particularly representative of both pagan and Christian receptions of Epicurus: Aristocles of Messene, Atticus, Dionysius of Alexandria and Plotinus. The aim of this brief investigation of the main features of these four authors' approach is to show that Epicureanism had a substantial presence in the Imperial age, even though it often functioned as a polemical target in the arena of philosophical contestation.

Aristocles of Messene on Epicurus' Theory of Affections

Aristocles of Messene (*fl.* c. first century BCE-first century CE) was a Peripatetic philosopher mainly known for his testimony on the Pyrrhonians reported by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Praep. evang.* 14.18.1 = F 4 Chiesara = T53 Decleva Caizzi). He is perhaps less known for his dense criticism of Epicurus' doctrine of affections (πάθη). Aristocles' criticism of the doctrine is not surprising, since it is an important part of the wider polemic between Epicureans and Peripatetics.[14] Before examining Aristocles' arguments, it is useful to recall the essential features of the Epicurean doctrine regarding affections.[15] The fundamental source of our knowledge of "canonic" – the first part of Epicurus' philosophical system – is Book 10 of Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae*. The biographer points out (10.30) that canonic is the introduction or, more literally, the access path to the whole system and is contained *only* in Epicurus' work *Canon*, which is unfortunately lost. We know very little about the plan of this composition, but since Diogenes asserts that Epicurus dealt with canonic issues "only in the *Canon*," it is plausible to conclude that the canonic section of Diogenes' *Vita Epicuri* largely depends on this work. It is difficult to establish, however, whether Diogenes quotes directly from Epicurus' *Canon* or consulted a doxographical source or a manual/handbook that summarized the contents of the *Canon* in a synthetic and schematic way.

The relevant segment of Diogenes' account dedicated to the theory of the affections is all too short, but nonetheless it provides the core concepts of the teaching on the subject (10.34):

> πάθη δὲ λέγουσιν εἶναι δύο, ἡδονὴν καὶ ἀλγηδόνα, ἱστάμενα περὶ πᾶν ζῷον, καὶ τὴν μὲν οἰκεῖον, τὴν δὲ ἀλλότριον· δι' ὧν κρίνεσθαι τὰς αἱρέσεις καὶ φυγάς.

14 For an overview of this large topic see Gigante 1999 and Verde 2016a.

15 On Epicurus' πάθη see Verde 2018b (also for further bibliographic entries).

> They [*sc.* the Epicureans] affirm that there are two affections, pleasure and pain, which arise in every animate being, and that the one is favourable and the other hostile to that being, and by their means choice and avoidance are determined.[16]

It should be noted that, according to Epicurus, the affections constitute an epistemological criterion of truth, exactly like sense-perception (αἴσθησις) and preconception or anticipation (πρόληψις). In Book 14 of his *Praeparatio evangelica* (14.21.1 = F 8 Chiesara; part. 260 Us.), Eusebius transmits *verbatim* a long passage by the Peripatetic Aristocles that argues against the Epicureans, who consider pleasure as the *telos* of the moral life. Aristocles' testimony in Eusebius is particularly interesting, as the philosopher criticizes the Epicurean doctrine of affections precisely in terms of their reliability as the criterion of truth. Eusebius prefaces his lengthy quotation of Aristocles with the claim that Epicurus and his followers, starting "from Aristippus' philosophical stance" (ἐκ τῆς Ἀριστίππου διαγωγῆς), made everything depend on pleasure and sense-perception. The mention of Aristippus in this regard is not accidental, for Eusebius' account fits into the widespread (and malevolent) "historiographical" or doxographical tendency to denigrate the originality of Epicurean thinking. The same strategy is found in Cicero, who considers Epicurus to be a philosopher lacking in originality[17] on the grounds that his physics derives from Democritus, while his ethics is borrowed from Aristippus (see *Fin.* 1.5.13–7.26; cf. DL 10.4).

After this introduction, Eusebius reports the Aristoclean passage *kata lexin*:

> Ἐπειδή ἐστι γνῶσις διττή, ἡ μὲν τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων, ἡ δὲ τῶν ἡμῖν αἱρετῶν καὶ φευκτῶν, ἔνιοί φασι τῆς αἱρέσεως καὶ φυγῆς ἀρχὴν καὶ κριτήριον ἔχειν ἡμᾶς τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὸν πόνον· ἔτι γέ τοι καὶ νῦν τοιαῦτά τινα λέγουσιν οἱ περὶ τὸν Ἐπίκουρον· ἀναγκαίως οὖν ἔχει καὶ περὶ τούτου σκέψασθαι. τοσούτου τοίνυν ἔγωγε δέω λέγειν ἀρχὴν εἶναι καὶ κανόνα τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν κακῶν τὸ πάθος, ὥστε ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ τοῦτο αὐτὸ κριτηρίου δεῖσθαι. Διότι μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν, ἑαυτὸ δείκνυσιν, ὁποῖον δ' ἐστὶν ἑτέρου δεῖ τοῦ κρινοῦντος. εἰ μὲν γὰρ οἰκεῖον ἢ ἀλλότριον, ἡ αἴσθησις λέγει, πότερον δ' αἱρετὸν ἢ φευκτόν, ὁ λόγος.
>
> Since knowledge is of two kinds, the one of external things, and the other of what to choose or avoid, some say that as the principle and criterion of choice and avoidance we have pleasure and pain. At least the Epicureans even now still say something of this kind; it is necessary therefore to consider this too. For my part, then, I am so far from saying that affection is the principle and canon of things good and evil that I think a criterion is needed for affection itself. To be sure, it proves its own existence, but something else is wanted to judge of its nature. For perception tells whether the affection is familiar or not, but it is reason that tells whether it is to be chosen or avoided.[18]

16 Translation is that of R. D. Hicks, with slight modifications.

17 On this topic see the lucid remarks of Erler 2011. See also Maso 2015, 25–46 and Maso 2022, 93–107.

18 Translation is that of M. L. Chiesara.

Aristocles' passage is of great interest, in that as its terminological precision leads us to conclude not only that the Peripatetic philosopher had a good knowledge of Epicurean philosophy, but also that his criticism is specifically focused on the doctrine of πάθη as criterion of truth; for he talks about κριτήριον or κανών with reference to the πάθη. Furthermore, he employs in this passage the genuinely Epicurean sets of binary terms: οἰκεῖον/ἀλλότριον and αἵρεσις/φυγή. As in the case of Diogenes Laertius, it is very difficult to establish whether Aristocles had unmediated access to Epicurus' *Canon*, since the account he offers of the Epicurean theory of πάθη is not so different from what one reads in Diogenes' *Vitae*. The reader could plausibly infer that Aristocles' exposition also derives from a manual or doxographic work, even if one expression ("At least the Epicureans even now still say something of this kind") suggests that he was aware of the success (or, at least, the dissemination) of this doctrine even in his own time.[19]

On several occasions Aristocles arguably evinces a direct knowledge of the philosophical sources to which he refers. This familiarity applies to Epicurus and, in particular, to a letter of his on occupations and another addressed to the philosophers in Mytilene (88 F1-7 Erbì), which are explicitly quoted by the philosopher (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 15.2.1 = F 2 Chiesara = 171 Us.). At the beginning of the passage transmitted by Eusebius, Aristocles identifies the existence of two forms of γνῶσις. The first concerns the external πράγματα, the second, the criteria to be applied in matters of choice and avoidance. This distinction may recall Sextus Empiricus' description of the epistemological and practical criteria in his work *Adversus mathematicos* (*Math.* 7.29). After correctly reporting the Epicurean position according to which pleasure and pain (and more generally τὸ πάθος) provide the basic principles guiding the issue of what needs to be chosen and avoided, Aristocles addresses a sharp criticism of the precept to the effect that Epicurus was wrong to considering the affections as unique criteria of truth, since in order to determine what should be pursued and avoided the affections stand in need of a further criterion capable of legitimizing and, above all, "governing" them. In brief, according to Aristocles, the Epicurean πάθη cannot be a reliable basis for arriving at truth because they are lacking in λόγος, which is essential in determining what should be chosen and what avoided. That affection is involved in sense-perception is self-evident, but in order to determine its true nature (ὁποῖον) another "faculty" is necessary. This argument seems to be, for all intents and purposes, of Aristotelian origin. As is very often the case, Aristocles manifests a substantial measure of "Peripatetic loyalty."[20]

19 On Aristocles' chronology (first century BCE-first century CE) see Chiesara 2001, xvi–xix.

20 See on this point Chiesara 2001, 163 and 165–167.

The topic of sense-perception in Aristotle is, of course, very complex, and cannot be treated in depth here. Suffice it to recall a few passages of the *De anima*, in which Aristotle asserts that sensation with respect to the appropriate sense-organ (e.g. sight with respect to the existence of a color) is not intrinsically deceptive (2.6.418a11–16). In 3.3.428a11–12 Aristotle concludes that sense-perceptions are "always true," while most "appearances" (φαντασίαι) are "false." This point is briefly explained in the sequel, where the philosopher observes that a perception made by the appropriate sense is true or, in any case, involves only minimal error (3.3.428b18–19). In addition to 2.6.418a11–16, the Aristotelian passage that is probably closer to Aristocles' argument against Epicurus is also taken from the *De anima* and concerns the sense of sight (3.3.428b21–22): ὅτι μὲν γὰρ λευκόν, οὐ ψεύδεται, εἰ δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λευκὸν ἢ ἄλλο τι, ψεύδεται ("For perception does not err in perceiving that an object is white, but only as to whether the white object is one thing or another," 3.3.428b21–22; transl. W. S. Hett). Sight does not err in regard to phenomena proper to its domain (such as color); that is to say, it does not confuse them with respect to the proper domain of another sense (for example, sound in regard to hearing); nevertheless, sight can confuse one color with another, or one colored object with another. In short, sense-perception only secures the existence of white but does not judge further.[21]

It is no coincidence that Aristocles, shortly after the above-mentioned passage, stresses (against Epicurus) that the best standards of knowledge (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.21.6) are "sense-perceptions *and* the intellect" (καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις **καὶ** τὸν νοῦν), just as there is no *sic et simpliciter* condemnation of the αἰσθήσεις in Aristotle,[22] who clearly rules out the attainment of the universal via sense-perception. Sense-perceptions, Aristocles concludes, cannot judge the truth by themselves (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.21.7): ἢ δεινόν γ' ἂν εἴη πεφυκότας ἀνθρώπους ἡδοναῖς καὶ πόνοις ἀλόγοις ἐπιτρέπειν ἑαυτούς, ἀφέντας τὸν θειότατον κριτὴν νοῦν ("Else it would be a monstrous thing for beings endowed with man's nature to entrust themselves to irrational pleasures and pains and forsake the most divine judge, Mind";[23] transl. M. L. Chiesara).

Aristocles' polemic against Epicurus – based on a notion of knowledge as a combined participation of sense-perception *and* intellect (although only intellect can ultimately judge the truth) – evidently does not take into account that, according to Epicurus' canonic, *only* αἰσθήσεις is ἄλογος (DL 10.31; cf. too Plat. *Tim.*

21 See too Aristot. *De sens.* 447b26–448a1.

22 Aristot. *An. post.* 1.31.87b28–33; *Metaph.* 1.1.981b10–13; *De an.* 2.5.417b21–23 and 3.4.429b14–18.

23 For Aristocles' νοῦς θειότατος see Aristot. *De an.* 1.5.408b29, along with the detailed annotations by Chiesara 2001, 165–166.

28a2–3), i.e. non-rational (since it is lacking in μνήμη or "memory"), whereas the other criteria (preconceptions and affections) presuppose the intervention of λογισμός ("reasoning").[24] If it were not so, (1) the πρόληψις could not "store", by elaborating them, the fundamental data of repeated sensations,[25] and (2) affections would not be able to judge anything in the practical sphere of action. According to Epicurus, the criteria of truth are epistemological tools and are based on the self-evidence inherent in ἐνάργεια.[26] These criteria do not need another corroborative entity that legitimizes their epistemological status. There is no doubt that Aristocles correctly links affections with sense-perceptions (*Men*. 124), but the most important point is that πάθη, considered as criteria of truth, are not on the same level as αἴσθησις precisely because the former "judge" (κρίνεσθαι), which is an activity that is totally impossible for sense-perception since it is devoid of λόγος. We do not know if any contemporary Epicureans replied to Aristocles' (fundamentally Aristotelian) criticisms of the founder of the Garden. The most significant point, from our point of view, is that this Epicurean doctrine of affections was the object of debate among followers of the Peripatos – secure evidence that this was reckoned a remarkable philosophical theory (especially on account of its link to pleasure and the ethical/practical sphere), which therefore merited reasoned refutation.

Atticus's Qualified Regard for Epicurus

Second only to Taurus, who was a thoroughly engaged critic of Epicurean ethics,[27] Atticus may be considered a chief exponent of Platonism in Athens.[28] According to the *Chronica* of Eusebius of Caesarea,[29] Atticus' *floruit* was in 176 CE – the same year that Marcus Aurelius instituted the Athenian philosophical chairs. If Taurus wrote a Περὶ τῆς τῶν δογμάτων διαφορᾶς Πλάτωνος καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους (*On the Difference between the Doctrines of Plato and Aristotle*),[30] Atticus wrote a Πρὸς τοὺς διὰ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους τὰ Πλάτωνος ὑπισχνουμένους (*Praep. evang.*

24 Warren 2014, 180 n. 10.

25 Tsouna 2016, 162–174 and Verde 2016b on the Epicurean criterion of preconception in general.

26 Ierodiakonou 2012; cf. the chapter by Hedrick in this volume for more on the role of ἐνάργεια.

27 See Gell. *Noct. Att.* 9.5.8 = 18 T. Gioè = T14 Petrucci.

28 Dillon 1996, 248.

29 CCXXXVIII *Olymp*., Helm 1956, 207: *Atticus Platonicae sectae philosophus agnoscitur*.

30 Suda Lexicon s.v. Ταῦρος (166) = 3 T. Gioè = T3 Petrucci.

11.1.2 = 1 des Places, *Against those who Profess to Explain the Doctrines of Plato by those of Aristotle*). From the title of the latter work (unfortunately lost) it can be inferred that Atticus' purpose was to discredit the tendency to reconcile the philosophy of Plato with that of Aristotle in order to defend Plato's originality and autonomy.[31] In the process, Atticus very often not only renders a superficial account of the doctrines of Aristotle, but also misrepresents them in accordance with his polemical purpose.[32] I will not deal here, however, with Atticus' distortions of Aristotelian doctrines; rather, I shall focus on a passage in Eusebius (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.1–14 = 3 des Places = Text 11A. Boys-Stones) that transmits Atticus' criticism of the Aristotelian refutation of providence. This passage conveys important insights into our topic, because Atticus shows that he had a good knowledge of Epicurean theology by citing the crucial Epicurean doctrine of the ὄνησις (advantage, enjoyment) of divine *simulacra* (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.7 = 385 Us.).

Closely following Eusebius' discussion, Atticus asserts that faith in providence is at the basis of the philosophy of Plato, who sees all things as connected with God and dependent on God (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.2); God is responsible for the universe that has been shaped in the best possible way – an assertion that is perfectly in line with Atticus' "literal" interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*.[33] The radical mistake of Aristotle, in his view, is his rejection of the divine nature of the cosmos (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.3) and, as a consequence, the "reverence" (εὐλάβειαν) due to the gods. Atticus, who identified *Timaeus*' demiurge with the Good of the *Respublica*,[34] deploys an argument against Aristotle that is typical of conventional anti-Epicurean polemic: to deny the role of providence in our world is to live amorally and to legitimize injustice (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.5). It is not by chance, then, that Atticus goes on immediately to compare Epicurus and Aristotle in terms of an underlying atheistic world-view: Epicurus, by virtue of his central doctrine of pleasure, encourages humankind to live without moral guidance, while Aristotle leads us to the same kind of life through the outright denial of the divine.[35] That is the main reason, in Atticus' eyes, that Aristotle and Epicurus are compatible at the philosophical level (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 15.5.8):

31 Chiaradonna 2015b, 436 n. 33.

32 Karamanolis 2006, 160.

33 See Procl. *In Plat. Tim.* 1.381.26–382.12 Diehl = 23 des Places = Text 4K. Boys-Stones, followed by Ferrari 2014, and, in more general terms, Petrucci 2015. On Plotinus and the exegetical neo-Platonic tradition on the *Timaeus*, see Chiaradonna 2016b.

34 See Procl. *In Plat. Tim.* 1.305.6–16 Diehl = 12 des Places = Text 6N. Boys-Stones, followed by Opsomer 2005, 73–79. According to Dillon 2003, 107 the identification of *Timaeus*' demiurge (and the ideal Paradigm) with the Good of the *Respublica* is to be found already in Xenocrates. For more in general on this matter see, too, Ferrari 2017–2018.

35 See Eus. *Praep. evang.* 15.5.7 and Karamanolis 2006, 163.

> τί γὰρ διαφέρει πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἢ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ θεῖον ἐξοικίσασθαι καὶ μηδεμίαν ἡμῖν πρὸς αὐτὸ κοινωνίαν ἀπολιπεῖν, ἢ ἐν κόσμῳ τοὺς θεοὺς καθείρξαντα τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς πραγμάτων ἀποστῆσαι; κατ' ἴσον γὰρ παρ' ἀμφοτέροις τὸ ἐκ θεῶν ἀμελὲς εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἴση τοῖς ἀδικοῦσιν ἡ ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν ἄδεια.
>
> For what difference does it make to us whether you banish deity from the world and leave us no communion therewith, or shut up the gods in the world and remove them from all share in the affairs of earth? For in both cases the indifference of the gods towards men is equal, and no less equal is the security of wrong-doers from fear of the gods.[36]

Atticus then goes into the argument in greater detail, pointing out that, if the gods' abode is in the sky (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.8), they must confer some benefit upon men; for this reason, even according to Epicurus, the gods are beneficent towards men. He adduces the Epicurean view that "the better emanations from them [sc. the gods] become the contributory causes of great blessings to those mortals who partake of them" (τὰς γοῦν βελτίονας ἀπορροίας αὐτῶν φασι τοῖς μετασχοῦσι μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν παραιτίας γίνεσθαι, *Praep. evang.* 15.5.9; Gifford's translation slightly modified). Atticus, correctly, does not attribute to the Epicurean gods any "pure causality" – this would be a clear contradiction to Epicurus' philosophy – but he more moderately speaks of contributory/"collateral" causes or παραίτιαι (at any rate a term used by Atticus to define Platonic ideas),[37] although in the Epicurean tradition there was at least one philosopher (Polyaenus of Lampsacus) who regarded the divine nature as a cause (see fr. 29 Tepedino Guerra = Philod. *Piet.* col. 38.1092–1099 Obbink).[38] Atticus emphasizes that the best emanations of the gods (i.e., the divine *simulacra* or images) are able to generate benefits to humans – an advantage directly linked to that imperturbability eternally experienced by the gods. For those who adopt the philosophy of Epicurus, the divine ἀταραξία of the gods is a tangible possibility that they can achieve in their own lives. That the divine *simulacra* conferred some benefits to mortals was probably already a Democritean doctrine, perhaps associated with the efficacy of prayer.[39]

Thanks to Atticus' testimony and other parallel sources, the veneration of the gods in the Epicurean system gains a very high ethical value, though coexisting with the inactivity of the divinity and the absence of providence. Since the *simulacra* of the gods bring incidental benefits to earthlings, it follows that to take part

36 The English translation of Eusebius' passages on Atticus and Dionysius is by E. H. Gifford.

37 See Eus. *Praep. evang.* 15.13.5 (= 9 des Places = Text. 5A. Boys-Stones). See on this topic the article by Bonuglia 2018.

38 See Piergiacomi 2017, 128–131. On Epicurus' theology see Spinelli/Verde 2020. (also for further bibliography).

39 See Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.19 = 68 B 166 DK = VII 27 D154 Laks/Most 2016 with Piergiacomi 2013a, 2013b and in this volume Chapter 5, n. 13. See also Verde/Zaccaria 2020.

in prayers and religious ceremonies (a practice actually followed by the Epicureans: see e.g. Philod. *Piet*. col. 27.754–772 Obbink [386 Us.]; also Diog. Oen. fr. 19. II.6–11 Smith) means to internalize successfully the divine *simulacra* and to make concrete the commitment to becoming "gods among men" (*Men*. 135).[40] In this sense, the gods are not merely ideal ethical and regulatory models introduced by Epicurus exclusively to make his own philosophical system consistent with the admission of eternally and authentically imperturbable beings. Rather, the gods become very important agents in shaping our ethical life by having an at least *indirectly* active role (albeit with no deliberate intent on their part) owing to the benefits that their *simulacra* bring us in the not always easy path towards an assimilation to godhead – an assimilation, however, that is absolutely earthly and circumscribed within the limits of human existence.[41] Obviously, Atticus does not intend to champion Epicurus' doctrine on this issue, but he certainly considers him theologically more consistent and worthy of respect than Aristotle, though ultimately, from the perspective of the Platonic philosopher, Epicurus, by denying providence and theorizing gods who only care for the preservation of their own goods, is, like Aristotle, a presumptive atheist.

Before quoting Atticus, Eusebius states that "Aristotle arrests the divine power at the moon, and marks off the remaining portions of the world from God's government" (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.1). On this point Eusebius appears very close to Origen, who in the *Contra Celsum* (1.21.9–12) compares Aristotle and Epicurus and concludes that, on the subject of providence, the latter is less impious than the former. In this respect Atticus does not contradict Eusebius, for he affirms that, while denying providence, Aristotle maintains that the heavenly motions are arranged in a certain order and array (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.9). The core of Atticus' anti-Aristotelian argument lies in the opinion that, in the field of theology, Epicurus shows "more reserve" (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.11) than Aristotle, not only because the *simulacra* of his gods bring benefits to men, but also because by placing the gods far away and outside of the cosmos, he could "justify" their disinterest in worldly affairs.

Epicurus would most probably disagree with Atticus' reconstruction of his theology on the grounds that the reason the gods do not care for men is not merely a function of their remote physical location, and the conception that the gods exist outside the universe is problematic and difficult to fathom.[42] Atticus is not interested, however, in the historically objective reconstruction of Epicurus's

40 Erler 2002b and Reydams-Schils 2017.

41 Drozdek 2005, 155–166 and Essler 2011, 357–358.

42 Essler 2011, 237–241 and 321–322.

philosophy, but uses Epicurus to counter Aristotle, who "after putting human affairs under the very eyes of the gods, yet left them uncared for and disregarded, to be administered by some natural disposition, and not by God's reasoning" (*Praep. evang.* 15.5.12: ὑπ' αὐτὴν τὴν ὄψιν τῶν θεῶν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πράγματα ὑποθεὶς εἴασεν ἀτημέλητα καὶ ἀφρόντιστα, φύσει τινὶ καὶ οὐ θεοῦ λογισμῷ διοικούμενα. [Gifford's translation slightly modified]). Aristotle is therefore more at fault than Epicurus, because though he does not place the divine outside of the universe, he ultimately leaves human affairs at the mercy of a φύσις that has nothing in common with the θεοῦ λογισμός (a likely quotation from Plato's *Timaeus* [e.g. 34a8]).[43] From this perspective, the φύσις of Aristotle acquires the same features as that of Epicurus. It is not accidental, therefore, that, in contrast to the Platonic demiurge, as well as to the "intelligent design" of the Stoics, the Epicureans notably strengthened the autonomous role of nature.[44] In terms of this critique, Aristotle, like Epicurus, can be regarded as a virtual atheist (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 15.5.12):

> ὅθεν εἰκότως ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς οὐδ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἔγκλημα ἐκφύγοι, ὃ κατ' Ἐπικούρου τινὲς μαντεύονται, ὡς ἄρα μὴ κατὰ γνώμην, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων δέος τοῖς θεοῖς κατένειμεν ἐν τῷ παντὶ χώραν ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ θέαν.
>
> Wherefore he [*sc.* Aristotle] himself cannot fairly escape that other charge that some (τινές) level against Epicurus: i.e. it was not according to his judgement, but through fear of men, that he allotted room in the universe to the gods, just like a spectator's place in a theatre

It is probable that the τινές mentioned in the above passage are an allusion to Posidonius,[45] for in his *De natura deorum* (1.123 = 22a Edelstein/Kidd) Cicero usefully reports the Posidonian position against Epicurean theology:[46] *Verius est igitur nimirum illud, quod familiaris omnium nostrum Posidonius disseruit in libro quinto de natura deorum, nullos esse deos Epicuro videri, quaeque is de deis inmortalibus dixerit invidiae detestandae gratia dixisse* ("So what that old friend of us all, Posidonius, argued in his fifth book of *De natura deorum* is surely nearer the truth, viz. that Epicurus thought that there were no gods, and whatever he said about the immortal gods, he said to avert popular indignation"; transl. I. G. Kidd). It seems very likely that Posidonius played an essential role in the dissemination of the idea of the (alleged) atheism of Epicurus. We find essentially the same argument made by Atticus also in the work of Dionysius of Alexandria:[47] the putative

43 Sharples 2002, 16.

44 See below 127, with Opsomer 2005, 57–59; Chiaradonna 2015a, 36–40; Erler 2017, 55–57.

45 Pease 1955, 535.

46 Maso 2015, 85 n. 2.

47 Fleischer 2016, 398–399.

atheism of Epicurus had become a conventional cliché of the polemic against Epicurean theology, but, as we have seen, Atticus does not refrain from using the same argumentative strategy against Aristotle.

Dionysius of Alexandria and Epicurean Theology

The figure of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, is complex and merits inclusion in scholarly debate on the philosophical and, more generally, cultural environment of Alexandria in the second and third centuries CE.[48] Dionysius was probably born in the late second century CE and died between the years 264 and 265. There are adequate grounds for the belief that Dionysius converted to Christianity and that he assumed the leadership of the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria as a presbyter beginning in 232 CE;[49] this is one key point in understanding his philosophical interests; another is the fact that he was a disciple of Origen – even though he was not a strict Origenist in the theological field, since he denied for example, the pre-existence of souls.[50] In 248 CE Dionysius became bishop of Alexandria in a period of violent persecution of the Christians, such as the persecution under Decius (emperor from 249 to 251 CE) and Valerian (emperor from 253 to 260 CE).[51] From Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* (7.26.2) we know that he dedicated to his son Timothy a work entitled *De natura* that certainly comprised several books.[52] Unfortunately, Dionysius's work does not survive in its entirety, but we learn from the same passage in Eusebius that it was epistolary in form. The largest extant segment of this work is preserved in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* (14.23.1–27.13 = frr. 1–7 Routh, see Fleischer [2016] 240–249 and 252–263); five short fragments are found in the *Sacra parallela* by John Damascene.[53] It has been persuasively shown that the portion of the *De natura* transmitted in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* comes from the first book of that work.[54] That a Christian bishop composed a *De natura* in accordance with the oldest pagan Greek philosophical tradition might occasion initial surprise. It should be kept in mind in this regard, however, that (1) Dionysius was the dean of the Catechetical School of

48 On Dionysius' life and works see Fleischer 2016, 217–233.

49 See Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.29.4.

50 Fleischer 2016, 234–236.

51 See Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.35.1.

52 Fleischer 2016, 237–411 usefully provides the text, the German translation, and a running commentary of all the *reliquiae* of Dionysius' *De natura.*

53 Holl 1899, 361 and 363–366; see Fleischer 2016, 250–251 and 263–264.

54 Fleischer 2016, 268–270 and 457.

Alexandria (and, therefore, officially engaged in doctrinal matters), and (2) Epicureanism might well have been rather widely disseminated in Alexandria during his tenure of the position.[55] Dionysius was a Christian bishop and, as we learn from Eusebius (*Praep. evang.* 14.22.17), had become an adherent "of Christ's philosophy" (τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφίας ἐπισκόπου ἀνδρός) shortly before transmitting some portions of the *De natura*. Under these circumstances one can readily understand that Dionysius's goal in this work was essentially polemical, since by definition a book entitled *De natura* must have had ancient physics as its main focus. The hypothesis that this was generally a polemical work directed against pagan physics in general is well founded; in any case, it is very likely that the first book was exclusively (or, at least, mainly) anti-Epicurean.[56]

An overview of the Epicurean doctrinal issues faced by Dionysius in the section of the *De natura* reported by Eusebius is in order at this juncture. To begin with, the sources used by Dionysius in his polemic against Epicurus are the subject of philological dispute. It has been argued, for instance, that Dionysius obtained his knowledge of Epicureanism from Platonic and/or Stoic manuals, which, of course, already included arguments against Epicurean precepts.[57] In any event, it is very likely that Dionysius had second-hand knowledge of Epicureanism as well as of the physics of Democritus – perhaps derived from doxographies or manuals, as well as from other works critical of Epicurus' philosophy.[58] Dionysius (or his sources) had an adequately precise knowledge of Epicurean atomism and of the main differences between the Master's views and those of Democritus.[59] It is no less significant that Dionysius (*Praep. evang.* 14.23.4) makes some terminological connections among ancient atomic theories: Diodorus Cronus' doctrine of ἀμερῆ (*Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* II F 8 Giannantoni 1990), and Heraclides of Pontus' theory of the ὄγκοι (59 Schütrumpf), promulgated later by Asclepiades of Bithynia.[60] This could imply that Dionysius had access to a doxographical work on the terminology employed by the atomists.

It is important to stress that Dionysius does not engage with Epicurean physics out of an interest in natural philosophy per se; as a Christian bishop, his target is, in general, Epicurus' ethical system and, more specifically, his theology as linked to the wholesale rejection of providence (πρόνοια) – and, by extension, of

55 That is shown by Fleischer 2016, 23–211; see too Fleischer 2016, 437–441.

56 See Fleischer 2016, 270–273.

57 Markschies 2000, 211.

58 Sources are cited in *Praep. evang.* 14.23.3 e 27.5 = 68 A 43 e B 119 DK = VII 27 R96 and D7/D274 Laks/Most 2016. See Fleischer 2016, 429–437.

59 See on this matter Verde 2013, 22–29.

60 Leith 2009; 2023 and Verde 2022, 173–195.

every form of theodicy, which are an emblematic *Leitmotive* of the anti-Epicurean Christian (but also pagan) polemic.[61] It is well known that Aristotle in Book 4 of his *Physica* (6–9) rejects the Atomistic conception of the void on essentially physical grounds. Dionysius, on the other hand, initiates his criticism of Epicurean atomism from a physical point of view because, as a Christian philosopher, he wants primarily to refute Epicurus' scandalous denial of providence and his dishonourable conception of divinity. According to Dionysius, atoms, being without wisdom and without perception or awareness (*Praep. evang.* 14.24.5; see too Plot. *Enn.* 4.7.(2).2–3), are unable to organize themselves and to shape the universe into a κόσμος, with its beautiful, harmonious and perfect structure. To Dionysius it is inconceivable that the random state of disorder posited for the atoms could somehow be transformed into order. Moreover, Dionysius makes the strong claim that, even if atoms differ in shape or arrangement, it is difficult to understand how they can shape the sun *and* the moon (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.25.6):

> Τίς οὖν ὁ φυλοκρινῶν συναγείρων τε καὶ ἀναχέων καὶ τάσδε μὲν οὕτω συντάττων εἰς ἥλιον, τάσδε δὲ ὡδὶ ἵνα ἡ σελήνη γένηται, καὶ ἑκάστας συμφέρων κατὰ τὴν οἰκειότητα πρὸς ἑκάστου φαῦσιν ἀστέρος; οὔτε γὰρ αἱ ἡλιακαὶ τοσαίδε καὶ τοιαίδε καὶ ὧδέ πως ἐνωθεῖσαι πρὸς ἐργασίαν καὶ σελήνης καταβεβήκεσαν οὔτε αἱ τῶν σεληνιακῶν ἀτόμων πλεκτάναι γεγόνασί ποτε ἥλιος·
>
> Who is it then that distinguishes the classes, and collects them, and spreads them abroad, and arranges some in this way for a sun, and others in that way to produce the moon, and brings together the several kinds according to their fitness for the light of each separate star? For neither would the solar atoms, of such a number and kind as they are, and in such wise united, ever have condescended to the formation of a moon, nor would the combinations of the lunar atoms ever have become a sun.

In arguing against Epicurus, Dionysius cites the authority of Paul, who conversed with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers during his stay in Athens, as one reads in a famous passage of the *Acta apostolorum* (17.18). Paul emphasized the differences between the sun, moon and stars (1 Cor. 15.41). Here Dionysius introduces a crucial argument in favour of Christian "creationism": even if one acknowledges the existence of atoms, these, being inanimate and without reason, need a skilled and wise demiurge who is able to organize them (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.25.7):

> καὶ εἰ μὲν ἀνεπαίσθητος αὐτῶν ὡς ἀψύχων ἡ σύμπηξις ἐγένετο, ἐπιστήμονος αὐταῖς ἔδει δημιουργοῦ· εἰ δὲ ἀπροαίρετος καὶ κατ' ἀνάγκην ὡς ἀλόγων ἡ σύνερξις, σοφός τις αὐτὰς

61 Spinelli 2015. On the relationship between Christians and Epicureans, see for a first but updated survey Erler 2018, 203–205; still useful on the same topic Simpson 1941; more in general Schmid 1961 and Jungkuntz 1962.

> ἀγελάρχης συνελαύνων ἐπεστάτησεν· εἰ δὲ ἑκουσίως ἐθελουργῆσαι συγκέκλῃνται, θαυμάσιός τις αὐτῶν ἀρχιτέκτων ἐργοδοτῶν προηγήσατο.
>
> And if their combination, as of things without life, took place unconsciously, they required a skilful artificer: and if their conjunction was involuntary and of necessity, as in things without reason, then some wise leader of the flock presided over their gathering. But if they have been willingly confined to the performance of a voluntary work, some marvellous architect took the lead in apportioning their work.

The mention of the demiurge is evidently a clear indication of a strong Platonic influence stemming from the *Timaeus*; of particular interest in this context is the metaphor of the "architect" (ἀρχιτέκτων), which appears for the first time as an attribute of God in the work of another famous Alexandrian philosopher who antedates Dionysius. In the *De opificio mundi* the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria on several occasions employs the image of the architect (17; 20) as well as that of the demiurge (18), both of which had also been ascribed to the creator God of Genesis. According to Philo, only a professional architect (*De opif.* 17) or a talented craftsman (18) could have built the intelligible world that is the archetype of the sensible one.[62] Dionysius utilizes the same argument: since the world is an ordered cosmos, only God could have been its creator and demiurge (*Praep. evang.* 14.27.8). This was a very common charge levelled against the Epicureans in both Christian and pagan circles. It is important to note, however, that the Epicureans countered it – as a decisive fragment found during the Oinoanda excavations of 2008 attests – by refining the notion of an original demiurge[63] and by contending further that nature itself (and not the divinity) possesses those demiurgical abilities necessary and sufficient for the formation of the universe.[64] The mistake and the blindness of the Epicureans (in the opinion of Dionysius) are also evident in their conception of human nature: atoms, given their unlimited disorder, cannot explain the existence of human beings. The "irrational mass of atoms" (*Praep. evang.* 14.26.10: ἡ τῶν ἀτόμων ἄλογος πληθύς) could not in any way shape the human being, who instead possesses a beautiful and harmonious physical form, which can only be the outcome of divine providence.[65]

Finally, a crucial element in Dionysius's criticism is the focus on the Epicurean theological construct, which allows the existence of the gods living in the *intermundia.* These are beings who remain totally detached from the world of

62 For further bibliography see Fleischer 2016, 328 nn. 152–153; De Luca 2021, 145–190. See also Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.8.19.

63 Diog. Oen. NF 155 = YF 200; see too Verde 2017a, 79–85, Erler 2017, 54–59; Verde 2021.

64 See again Erler 2017, 54–59.

65 See Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.26.4.

human beings[66] and therefore dispense neither good nor evil fortunes. Although Dionysius does concede that Epicurus not only acknowledged the existence of the gods and, above all, their beatitude (*Praep. evang.* 14.27.9), but also exhorted all men to participate in this beatitude by emulating them, he nevertheless regards him as a hypocrite and a charlatan insofar as he derides the conventional gods (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.27.10–11):

> τοιαύτη γὰρ ἀδιανόητος ἦν αὖ ἡ παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ ματαία ὑπόκρισις ἡ τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασία. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν πρόδηλον, ὅτι μετὰ τὸν Σωκράτους θάνατον κατεπτηχὼς Ἀθηναίους ὡς μὴ δοκοίη τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἦν ἄθεος εἶναι, κενὰς αὐτοῖς ἀνυποστάτων θεῶν τερατευσάμενος ἐζωγράφησε σκιάς.
>
> Such an unintelligible and empty piece of acting on his part was his mentioning the name of the gods. This however is evident: after the death of Socrates he was afraid of offending the Athenians, and in order that he might not seem to be what he really was (an atheist), he played the charlatan and painted for them some empty shadows of insubstantial gods.

Adopting an earlier pre-Christian criticism, Dionysius concludes that Epicurus ultimately was an ἄθεος and that only the fear of dying like Socrates (a philosopher who was also notoriously accused of impiety) led him to admit the existence of the gods. To the bishop of Alexandria, Epicurus viewed chance as the absolute ruler of all phenomena (see *Praep. evang.* 14.27.4): hence, the existence of the gods must only have been a mere pretext. To this point Dionysius adds a further argument: whereas Epicurus theorized the existence of the gods as devoid of any occupation and disturbance that would be incompatible with their μακαριότης (see especially *Men.* 123–124), Dionysius vindicates a different conception of divinity which is wholly irreconcilable with that of Epicurus. From the vantage-point of the Christian theologian, God is God if – and only if – he is actively involved in mortal affairs (Eus. *Praep. evang.* 14.27.1):

> Ἐργάζεσθαι δέ γε καὶ διοικεῖν καὶ εὐεργετεῖν τε καὶ προκήδεσθαι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τοῖς μὲν ἀργοῖς καὶ ἄφροσι καὶ ἀσθενέσι καὶ κακούργοις ἴσως ἐπαχθῆ, οἷς ἐγκατέλεξεν ἑαυτὸν Ἐπίκουρος, τοιαῦτα φρονήσας περὶ τῶν θεῶν· τοῖς δὲ σπουδαίοις καὶ συνετοῖς καὶ δυνατοῖς καὶ σώφροσιν, οἵους εἶναι χρὴ τοὺς φιλοσόφους (πόσῳ γε μᾶλλον τοὺς θεούς;), οὐχ ὅπως ἀηδῆ ταῦτα καὶ προσάντη, ἀλλὰ καὶ τερπνότατα καὶ πάντων μᾶλλον ἀσπαστότατα, οἷς τὸ ἀμελὲς καὶ τὸ μέλλειν τι πράττειν τῶν χρηστῶν ὄνειδος.
>
> But to work, and to administer, to do good and to show forethought, and all such actions are burdensome perhaps to the idle and foolish, as well as to the feeble and wicked, among

66 See on this matter the very interesting fragment by Diogenes of Oinoanda (NF 127 = YF 190; see Hammerstaedt/Smith 2014, 143–148) that contains an argument against belief in a providential god who created the world as a city and human beings as fellow citizens.

> whom Epicurus enrolled himself by entertaining such thoughts of the gods; but to the earnest, able, wise and prudent, such as philosophers ought to be (how much more the gods?), not only are these things not unpleasant and arduous, but even most delightful and above all else most welcome; for to them carelessness and delay in performing any good action are judged to be a disgrace.

There is no doubt that the Epicureans could easily reply to Dionysius' strictures, but obviously what concerns the bishop is to demolish those Epicurean doctrines that could be more dangerous and disadvantageous to the Christian faith, namely, the lack of providence and the inactivity of the gods. What makes Dionysius a significant figure is the fact that he reverts to physics in order to refute Epicurus; from this point of view, the bishop shows an understanding of the basic premises of the Epicurean philosophical system and its partition, according to which physics is only useful as a foundation for ethics (see KD 11 and 12). He is perfectly convinced that, at the basis of the ethical and theological aberrations of Epicurus, there lies a blind and irrational physical materialism, which cannot in any way explain the variety, the order and the beauty of creation.

Plotinus, the Gnostics and Epicurus

Plotinus refers to Epicurus only once by name, in a passage devoted to the rejection of the (Christian) Gnostics (*Treatise 33* [*Enn.* 2.9.15.8]). Nevertheless, it is possible to trace in the *Enneades* several implicit and oblique allusions to Epicurean technical vocabulary and, more generally, to that of the Atomists. From this we may infer that Epicureanism is one of Plotinus' main polemical targets.[67] In *Treatise 33* Epicurus is (paradoxically) considered almost "better" than the Gnostics, who, by their doctrine (according to Plotinus) offend the "lord of providence" (τὸν τῆς προνοίας κύριον) and even "providence itself" (αὐτὴν τὴν πρόνοιαν). With regard to the ill-defined and slippery term "Gnostic" it would be better to speak of "Gnostic galaxy," since the doctrinal orientations and tendencies of ancient Christian Gnosticism, as is well known, are varied and do not always exhibit traits in common. Plotinus here takes aims at some Christian Gnostics who, while superficially imbued with Platonism, are incapable, in his view, of constructing rational arguments embodying Plato's key conceptions regarding the structure of the cosmos.[68] Those Gnostics mainly founded their αἵρεσις on an absolute dual-

67 On this extensive topic see the pioneering volume edited by Longo/Taormina 2016. See also Verde 2017b.

68 Chiaradonna 2016a, 99–107.

ism that is far more comprehensive than the genuinely Platonic version normally defended by Plotinus,[69] to the extent that it leads to the complete devaluation of the sensible cosmos. This very pronounced dualism – ultimately reducible to an absolute monism, since the divine Pleroma's integrity is the only true reality – dissolves all forms of providence and, by extension, of whatever ontological dignity may be intrinsic to the material world. Especially in relation to this last point, the Gnostics were, according to Plotinus, more at fault than Epicurus.

It is precisely in the context of his dense criticism directed against the Gnostics that Plotinus, who is usually very sparing with direct quotations, mentions Epicurus, the only post-Aristotelian philosopher cited by name in the *Enneades* (2.9.15.1–17; transl. A. H. Armstrong, slightly modified by Longo: see Longo 2016, 52–53):

> Ἐκεῖνο δὲ μάλιστα δεῖ μὴ λανθάνειν ἡμᾶς, τί ποτε ποιοῦσιν οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἀκουόντων καὶ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ καταφρονεῖν πεισθέντων. Δυοῖν γὰρ οὐσῶν αἱρέσεων τοῦ τυχεῖν τοῦ τέλους, μιᾶς μὲν τῆς ἡδονὴν τὴν τοῦ σώματος τέλος τιθεμένης, ἑτέρας δὲ τῆς τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν αἱρουμένης, οἷς καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς θεὸν ἀνήρτηται ἡ ὄρεξις, ὡς δὲ ἐν ἄλλοις θεωρητέον, ὁ μὲν Ἐπίκουρος τὴν πρόνοιαν ἀνελὼν τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὸ ἥδεσθαι, ὅπερ ἦν λοιπόν, τοῦτο διώκειν παρακελεύεται· ὁ δὲ λόγος οὗτος ἔτι νεανικώτερον τὸν τῆς προνοίας κύριον καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν πρόνοιαν μεμψάμενος καὶ πάντας νόμους τοὺς ἐνταῦθα ἀτιμάσας καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν τὴν ἐκ παντὸς τοῦ χρόνου ἀνηυρημένην τό τε σωφρονεῖν τοῦτο ἐν γέλωτι θέμενος, ἵνα μηδὲν καλὸν ἐνταῦθα δὴ ὀφθείη ὑπάρχον, ἀνεῖλε τὸ σωφρονεῖν καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσι σύμφυτον δικαιοσύνην τὴν τελειουμένην ἐκ λόγου καὶ ἀσκήσεως καὶ ὅλως καθ' ἃ σπουδαῖος ἄνθρωπος ἂν γένοιτο.
>
> But there is one point which we must be particularly careful not to let escape us, and that is what these arguments do to the souls of those who hear them and are persuaded by them to despise the universe and the beings in it. For there are two schools of thought about attaining the end, one which puts forward the pleasure of the body as the end, and another which chooses nobility and virtue, for those member's desire depends on God and leads back to God (a topic that must be explored elsewhere): Epicurus, who abolishes providence (368 Us.), exhorts us to pursue pleasure and its enjoyment (403 Us.), which is what is left, but this doctrine [sc. held by the Gnostics] which censures the lord of providence and providence itself still more crudely, and despises all the laws of this world and the virtue whose winning extends back through all time, and makes self-control here something to laugh at, so that nothing noble may be seen existing here below, abolishes self-control and the righteousness which comes to birth with men's characters and is perfected by reason and training, and altogether everything by which a man could become nobly good.

69 Spanu 2012. On the "dialogical familiarity" of Plotinus with the Gnostics, see in general Narbonne 2011. On the complex relationship between Gnosticism and Platonism, see Bonazzi 2016 and, more generally, Tanaseanu-Döbler 2016.

In mentioning the philosopher's name, Plotinus connects the negation of providence to the pursuit of pleasure, a conceptual link that is absent from known Epicurean texts. Nevertheless, one can find very interesting parallels to this connection not only in Celsus and Origen, but also, as we have seen, in Atticus: the negation of providence leads to the absence of actual incentives to the pursuit of moral virtue, and thus to the operation of unrestricted motivations to pleasure.[70] Despite his reference to Epicurus, then, it seems plausible to conclude that Plotinus did not possess a direct or in-depth knowledge of Epicurus, though this does not mean that he was unfamiliar with the main tenets of his philosophy; nor does it prove that he is sparing with direct quotations of Epicurus because the latter's texts were not in wide circulation in his own time. That Plotinus cites Epicurus in a more anti-Gnostic than specifically anti-Epicurean discursive context suggests rather that he may conceivably have been directly familiar, at least in part, with the philosopher's work. In *Treatise 33* the role played by Epicurus is ultimately rather secondary and, in any case, subordinate to that of the Gnostics, who are the true target of the exposition.[71]

Plotinus is arguably not the first to posit a relationship between Epicureanism and Gnosticism: he may indeed have appropriated it from the heresiologists. In this regard, it is pertinent to recall a significant (and, at the same time, polemical) passage from Tertullian's *Contra Marcionem* (5.19.7), where the Christian apologist does not hesitate to regard Epicurus as a sort of πρῶτος εὑρετής of Marcion's heretical teachings. It is well known that the heresiologists had no great difficulty in tracing in Marcion's several remarkable parallelisms with Christian Gnosticism, especially in light of a fundamental dualism that, *mutatis mutandis*, is shared by Marcion and the Gnostics.[72] Because the heresiologists generally made the Christian heresies dependent on pagan philosophy,[73] Epicurean theology was considered to be an excellent reference point for pagan and, consequently, Gnostic thought, at least from the point of view of the apologists who defended Christian doctrine. In the passage cited below, Tertullian describes with the term *hebes* the god of Epicurus – a convenient and suitable designation for those who, like Marcion and the Gnostics, assumed that the demiurge was an evil god, ultimately responsible for the existence of an imperfect and wicked material world.[74] Unquestionably, Plotinus (like Epicurus) could not share this view, particularly because of the absence in his philosophy of an ontologically evil principle, such as

70 Longo 2016a.

71 Longo 2016a, 56; Longo 2016b, 92–93.

72 Moll 2010, 72–75.

73 See, e.g., Tertullian's *De praescr. haeret*. Chapter 7; see too Karamanolis 2021, Chapter 1.

74 Burns 2014, 32–47.

the irrational component of the ψυχή typical of some Middle-Platonic philosophers like Plutarch.[75] This observation does not, however, diminish the weight and relevance that Epicurus' thought had for Plotinus.[76]

Conclusion

In the four "case studies" I have briefly examined (Aristocles, Atticus, Dionysius and Plotinus), Epicurus' philosophy is regularly treated by the authors as a target of polemic, and not as a subject of rigorous inquiry. Since none of these thinkers is interested in a precise knowledge of what Epicurus actually wrote, it is not surprising that their criticisms often reflect a distorted account of the founder's original philosophical thought. This appraisal of the basis of their respective arguments shows that the part of the Epicurean system they were bent on refuting was above all ethics – a term that includes not only the central doctrine of pleasure but also the associated theology, which rejects of role of providence in the universe. Their refutations employ differing strategies: some seek to undermine the Epicurean ethics of pleasure by focusing on Epicurus' canonic, where pleasure, together with pain, is one of the πάθη that furnish the epistemological criteria of truth (Aristocles). Others focus primarily on the Epicurean physical materialism that is conducive, in their outlook, to virtual atheism (Dionysius). Finally, there are also examples in our case-studies of a very moderate (though hardly sincere) appreciation of the Epicurean viewpoint, which is credited with more plausibility than the Aristotelian (Atticus) or the Gnostic (Plotinus) positions. But even in the latter cases (Atticus; Plotinus), it is apparent that appreciation of the merits of Epicurus does not encompass approval of or admiration for his philosophy; rather, it functions as a further means of devaluing other polemical targets such as Aristotle or the Gnostics. What is common to the different strategies is the premise that Epicurean thought, by virtue of its fundamental doctrine of pleasure, perverts the proper use of the intellect and exhorts mankind to live amorally in a world left to blind chance that is governed neither by the gods nor by divine providence. This primarily represents the fundamental feature, in my view, of the continued polemic against Epicurus from the late Republican era to the third century CE.

75 See at least Ferrari 1996 and Sorabji 2021, 95–96.

76 See the introduction in Longo/Taormina 2016, 1–25.

Michael Erler

Chapter 7
Augustine and Epicureanism

It may come as a surprise to find Augustine included in a collection of contributions on the theme of Epicurus and Roman literature. Like other Church Fathers before him, Augustine did not regard Epicurus' philosophy as a serious philosophical option; rather, he denigrated it because of its hedonistic, materialistic and sensualist aspects, which led to its founder being regarded as a *homo carnalis*. Certain basic tenets of that philosophy, such as the denial of the immortality of the soul and the rejection of the providence of gods, were preferred targets of Christian polemics. Epicureanism even became an abusive tag among Christian apologists, so that the very name "Epicurus" was occasionally used as an insult.[1] Epicurean teachings were often used to darken negative aspects of a writer's own world view – a strategy that Philo of Alexandria deployed in describing the snake in the Garden of Eden.[2]

In Augustine's time, Epicurus' teachings had receded into the background because of the dominance of Neo-Platonism and Christianity. In a letter from the year 410 CE, Augustine states that Stoics and Epicureans no longer played any part in the schools of rhetoric and that their ashes were already cold. As early as 387 CE, Augustine asserted that there no longer existed any philosophers other than Platonists, Peripatetics and Cynics.[3] To be sure, this sweeping assertion does not exclude the possibility of the continued existence of other schools at that time, like the Epicureans, but Augustine obviously did not pay much attention to them or regard them as a valid disciplinary tradition.[4] Elsewhere, he observes that "the Epicureans flourished among the unlearned masses,"[5] which is an observation that revives a traditional polemical stance against the Epicureans regarding them as ill-educated.[6] In his *De finibus*, for instance, Cicero teasingly accuses his friend Torquatus, who was a confirmed Epicurean, of reading historical and literary texts, just as all other educated contemporary Romans, even though the latter's philosophical master, Epicurus, did not favor this pursuit on the grounds that in the poets one cannot find

1 Hier. *C. Ruf.* 1.30.67; see also Jungkuntz 1966.
2 Cf. Booth 1994.
3 August. *C. acad.* 3.42; cf. August. *Ep.* 118.21. On this general topic see also Verde in this volume.
4 Cf. Ferguson/Hershbell 1990, 2257–2327, esp. 2317.
5 August. *Ep.* 118.14 = *CSEL* 34.2; 679.10.
6 Fr. 163 Us.; cf. also Cic. *Fin.* 2.12; see Erler 1992a, 171–200, esp. 177.

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anything but childish delight.[7] These pejorative remarks on the part of Augustine indicate that Epicureanism was probably not "dead" in his time; on the contrary, it is plausible to assume that Epicurus' teachings still belonged to the educational canon in Augustine's day. It has to be admitted, however, that it manifestly did not play as significant a role in the intellectual life of his era as it had in the centuries before, when Epicureans had participated in philosophical discourses even with Christians.

Indeed, despite the mutual antagonism and many divergencies between them, both Epicureans and Christians acknowledged some points of convergence in their respective teachings. For instance, they were prone to join forces as allies and critics whenever there was need for resistance against false prophets and oracles, which were crooked because their sources were dishonest. Christians and Epicureans were also generally united in their aversion to pagan religious tradition, which they both denigrated as superstition. Lucretius, for instance, illustrates the baneful result of superstition by describing the sacrifice of Iphigenia or by emphasising the negative role of religion throughout Rome's history.[8] The Epicureans, of course, accepted conventional religious practices, such as prayer, but they strongly denied that they could somehow influence the gods. What both Christians and Epicureans had in common was their wish to provide human beings with an alternative way of life; the main difference between their respective visions, however, was that the Epicureans aimed at attaining happiness in this world, while the Christians promised a blessed state in another world. In addition, the Epicureans fought against any form of religious enthusiasm, while the Christians were convinced that they alone had access to the true faith and the blessed state offered to them in the afterlife.

Despite these differences, both traditions were attacked in their heyday because they distanced themselves from any ambitions of engaging in public life. There are even some elements of Epicurean doctrine that could be regarded by Christians as pointing in a positive direction, like the Epicurean concept of friendship, which seemed to anticipate, to some degree, the Christian idea of ἀγάπη.[9] For, according to Epicurus, friendship and empathy are essential to providing security, which for Epicureans is the *condicio sine qua non* of happiness. Furthermore, of all schools the Epicureans in their cultivation of "friendship" (φιλία) came closest to anticipating Christian ἀγάπη. Now, if according to the Epicureans friends are necessary to provide ἀταραξία and happiness, and if friendship can

7 Cic. *Fin.* 1.71.; 2.12; cf. Asmis 1995, 22–25; Erler 2006, 247–248.

8 Lucr. 5.1161–1240.

9 Cf. Armstrong 1979, 128–129.

be achieved only if one loves someone as much as oneself, the Epicurean egoistic desire of security can only be fulfilled if one acts altruistically, i.e., if we treat someone as an end in itself, which in a way anticipates Christian teaching at least partially.[10]

In view of the Epicureans' regard for their founder as a savior who lived to redeem mankind, many Christians might, at least to some extent, have seen a parallel with the philanthropy of Jesus Christ, even though they firmly rejected fundamental tenets of Epicurus' doctrines. Epicurus, in fact, was often held in high esteem by pagan and Christian opponents because of his way of life. Clemens of Alexandria, for instance, valued Epicurus as a person because of his lifestyle, which he found to be moderate and controlled. He also appreciated Epicurus' request to philosophize at any age.[11] This partially positive reception of certain Epicurean ideas, topics, motifs or even arguments – for example, those surrounding the question whether the world was created or not – does not signal a serious commitment of any Christian thinker to Epicurean doctrine but rather a rhetorical tactic intended to undermine other pagan philosophies. In the *Confessiones*, Augustine describes how, in a certain phase of his spiritual life, he weighed the Epicurean against the Platonic position in relation to death, and how, in doing so, he was taken by the suggestive power of the Epicurean arguments. Nevertheless, he sees that only the fear of God's judgment on the other side keeps him from lust and its temptations.[12]

These mixed reactions on the part of Christian writers corroborate the observation that Epicurean teachings remained in continuous circulation, not only during the time of Augustine but also until the end of Late Antiquity.[13] From the first century BCE onwards, two strands in the reception of Epicureanism in the Roman and Platonic-Christian contexts can be observed: the rejection of fundamental Epicurean doctrines, on the one hand, and a quite positive appreciation of practical elements of Epicurean ethics, on the other. Epicurus' ethical system, which included a range of techniques for securing a life ruled by rational principles, was treated with respect even by those who sharply rejected his materialistic physics and theology. In particular, the Epicurean conception of philosophy as a therapy (*philosophia medicans*),[14] which was expected to assist in the practical management of life, combined with the focus later Epicureans laid on this aspect of the

10 Two Christian writers look back to Lucretius' hymn to Epicurus in composing their own eulogies of Christ; cf. Lucr. 5.1–8; Arnob. *Adv. nat.* 1.38; Lact. *Div. inst.* 3.14.1.

11 Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4.69.2–4.

12 August. *Conf.* 6.16–26; see Erler 2004, 81.

13 Cf. Ferguson/Hershbell 1990, 2316–2317; Erler 1994, 29–490, esp. 189; Fuhrer 2000.

14 Cf. Gigante 1975.

canon, not only helped his teachings to become a vital part of the pagan philosophical tradition in Rome, but even came to exert an influence on the thought of Christian writers like Augustine (albeit in the reduced form of an *Epicurus dimidiatus*). In short, Epicurus' teachings appear to have continued educational value in Augustine's time.

Despite Augustine's general hostility towards basic Epicurean doctrines, which he accused of being untidy,[15] certain aspects of the system played a not insignificant role in his own intellectual life. In this regard, it is useful to examine the sources for his knowledge of the basic tenets of Epicurean thought. Some passages in his work prove that he acquired it primarily through the works of Cicero. We learn from his own writings, for instance, that Cicero's *De finibus* sparked his interest in Epicurean philosophy and, more broadly, in the dispute among the Hellenistic schools about the nature of "pleasure" (ἡδονή) and the role of friendship in attaining a "secure and happy life" (εὐδαιμονία).[16] Other important Ciceronian sources of his knowledge of Epicurus were the *De natura deorum* and the *Tusculanae disputationes.*

In addition to these Ciceronian texts, Augustine demonstrably had direct knowledge of the text of Lucretius' *De rerum natura.*[17] He not only refers to themes and doctrines articulated in this influential poem, which is, of course, a major source for our knowledge of Epicureanism, but he also occasionally uses phrases that are arguably borrowed from it; sometimes he even alludes to particular passages.[18] When discussing topics like friendship, peace, sexual love and freedom from anxiety in his works, Augustine gives the impression that he did not disagree with everything Epicurus and Lucretius had to say.

These partial compatibilities fit into the frame of Augustine's general thesis that pagan philosophy – including even Epicureanism – anticipated certain tenets of Christian belief. It therefore makes sense to take Augustine at his word when he claims in his *Confessiones* that Epicurean doctrines played a momentous role in his mental development; as, for instance, when he reflects in Book 6 of this work on his intellectual struggle to find the truth after he left Manichaeism and became, first a Platonist, and then a Christian.[19] As the *Confessiones*, as well as *Civitas Dei* and other writings of Augustine show, identifiable ingredients of Epi-

15 August. *Serm.* 150.10.

16 August. *Conf.* 3.4.7 (= Cicero's *Hortensius, fr.* 10 Mueller).

17 August. *Util. cred.* 10.

18 Cf. Hagendahl 1967, 211–212; cf. Arnob. *Adv. nat.* 3.11.25 and Lucr. 5.96; August. *Trin.* 4 praef. and Lucr. 1.73; August. *Lib. arb.* 1.6.14 and Lucr. 1.80–101; August. *Gen.* 12.25 and Lucr. 4.387–394; Ferguson/Hershbell 1990, 2316–2317; Erler 2002a.

19 Cf. Simpson 1985, esp. 41.

curean doctrines occur not only in polemical contexts. Like others before him, Augustine, it seems, was influenced in some ways by Epicurus' ethical theories and actual praxis.

Augustine's attitude towards Epicurus proves that he shares the ambivalent approach that can be observed in other Christian authors as well.[20] Whereas Epicurus' doctrines merely serve as a target for Augustine's polemics, he occasionally makes use of Epicurean teachings to give profile to his own positions, and sometimes – though rarely – he even approves of elements of Epicurean ethics. In the end, it is apparent that Augustine's attitude towards Epicurus is as ambivalent as that of many other Church fathers before him, despite all their polemics.

Apart from this shared ambivalence, however, Augustine's general attitude towards Epicureanism is preponderantly hostile. When he criticizes pagan philosophy, Epicureans constitute his main target and, in this context, he tends to resort for the most part to traditional arguments, such as their lack of erudition, their appeal to human weaknesses, their denial of God's providence and their belief in the mortality of the soul and hedonism, all of which can also be found in the texts of earlier Christian writers like Tertullian or Origen.[21] A prominent theme in Augustine's polemics is his reproach that Epicurus turns the conventional virtues into slaves of carnal desire.[22] Other points of his critique are directed at Epicurean materialism, psychology and theology. Like others before him, Augustine calls Epicurus a fool or – because of his hedonistic position – a Bacchus; or else he compares him to a pig, thereby transferring to the philosopher a metaphor that Horace ironically applies to himself.[23] Epicurean hedonism was commonly interpreted by Christians as a license for humans to live a luxurious life and to surrender to the desires of the flesh. Augustine, too, regarded Epicurus' denial of the immortality of the soul as being more fitting for pigs than humans, and he claimed that Epicurus argued for the mortality of the soul only in order to find an excuse to live a more hedonistic life (*Ep.* 104.3):

> Hoc enim potius in illis litteris legi, quoniam vita ipsa qua fruimur brevis est, in qua tu arbitraris, et frequentatum in litteris iam mones, aeternam esse posse calamitatem: mortem autem malorum omnium esse finem, habent quidem vestrae litterae, sed nec ipsae omnes; Epicureorum est quippe ista sententia, et si qui alii mortalem animam putant. At illi quos

20 A good example is Dante. The poet of the *Divina Commedia* banned the Epicureans to the tenth circle of the *Inferno*. But in his work entitled *Il Convivio* (cf. Dante, *Convivio* 3.14.15), he nevertheless allows Epicureans, in company of Peripatetics and Stoics, to prepare for the path to truth, although he denied that Epicurus would succeed in reaching the truth in the end.

21 Tert. *Apol.* 3; for Origen see Markschies 2000.

22 August. *Serm.* 348.3; cf. *De civ. D.* 5.20; Cic. *Fin.* 2.69.

23 Hor. *Epist.* 1.4.16; on Horace and Epicureansim, see Davis in this volume. See also August. *Psalm.* 73.25; *C. acad.* 3.7.16; *Ep.* 104.3.

> Tullius quasi consulares philosophos appellat, quod eorum magnipendat auctoritatem, quoniam cum extremum diem fungimur, non exstingui animam, sed emigrare censent, et ut merita quoque eius asserunt seu bona, seu mala, vel, ad beatitudinem, vel ad miseriam permanere.
>
> In the writings referred to, I for my part have read, not that in this life – as you think, and as you allege that these writings frequently affirm – there can be an eternity of wretchedness, but rather that this life itself which we here enjoy is short. Some indeed but not all of your authors have said that death is the end of all evils: that is indeed the opinion of the Epicureans and of such others as believe the soul to be mortal. But those philosophers whom Cicero designates "consulates" in a certain sense, because he attaches great weight to their authority, are of the opinion that when our last hour on earth comes the soul is not annihilated, but removed from its tenement, and continues in existence for a state of blessedness or of misery, according to that which a man's actions, whether good or bad, claim as their due recompense. (Translation: Cunningham 1887)

Polemics notwithstanding, Augustine's criticism is often, at bottom, perceptive, and shows that he is well acquainted with the main tenets of Epicurean teachings, such as the theory of the existence of multiple worlds.[24]

In rendering an account of his intellectual education in the *Confessiones*, Augustine tells us that Epicurean teachings were quite attractive to him at a time when he had renounced Manichaeism and was looking for new ways that might help him discover the truth. He confesses that in his progress towards Christianity via Platonism, Epicurus' teachings played a pivotal role and even inspired him, to some extent, in his search for theological certainty. In this decisive phase of his life – as he discloses in the sixth book of the *Confessiones* – he felt a kind of affinity with Epicurean ideas that he later came to consider as deeply misguided. In this phase of his intellectual journey, however, Augustine regarded Epicurean doctrines as belonging to the part of ancient pagan philosophy that appeared to foreshadow certain aspects of Christian belief. Thus, he admits to the reader that, like others before him, he was especially impressed by Epicurus' ethical precepts, his manner of life and his ideal of moderation as far as pleasures are concerned.

This viewpoint seems to be the background to the story Augustine tells in the *Confessiones* in the context of a discussion of conceptions of the ideal life. He relates that, when he was still teacher of rhetoric in Milan, he came upon a beggar on the street, who obviously was drunk, but seemed to be happy (*Conf.* 6.6.9): *animadverti pauperem mendicum iam, credo, saturum iocantem atque laetantem* ("I observed a poor beggar man, half-drunk I believe, very jocund and pleasant upon

24 Cf. August. *Ep.* 118.28; *De civ. D.* 6.5.20.

the matter").[25] This observation made him reflect upon and discuss his own way of life at that time as an ambitious rhetorician. Augustine had to admit that the only thing he was longing to secure was pleasure and he therefore recognised the life of the beggar as superior to his own (*Conf.* 6.6.9):

> Quod enim iam ille pauculis et emendicatis nummulis adeptus erat, ad hoc ego tam aerumnosis anfractibus et circuitibus ambiebam, ad laetitiam scilicet temporalis felicitatis.
>
> What he had acquired with a few small coins obtained by begging I was still circumnavigating with difficulties and digressions – namely the joy of worldly happiness.

This anecdote from Book 6 of the *Confessiones* illustrates well Augustine's reflections on his choosing a different ideal of living, which obviously is meant to remind us of his youthful attraction to Epicurean teachings.[26] Augustine describes the beggar as a creature who, though poor and obviously drunk, nonetheless seems to be happy, because he loves to live a secluded life filled with pleasure by means of avoiding pain, and obviously succeeds in doing so without any anxiety. It has been plausibly argued that this beggar and his behaviour reminded Augustine (and the reader) of the virtues of a typical Epicurean practitioner: a person withdrawn from social life and its obligations but enjoying himself in the pursuit of bodily pleasures. This exemplification is based, of course, on a basic misconception regarding Epicurean ethics, for by no means does Epicurus encourage the pursuit of immoderate bodily pleasures in order to live a happy life, as he himself says in his letter to Menoeceus (DL 10.131–132):

> τὸ μήτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα μήτε ταράττεσθαι κατὰ ψυχήν· οὐ γὰρ πότοι καὶ κῶμοι συνείροντες οὐδ' ἀπολαύσεις παίδων καὶ γυναικῶν οὐδ' ἰχθύων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα φέρει πολυτελὴς τράπεζα, τὸν ἡδὺν γεννᾷ βίον, ἀλλὰ νήφων λογισμός.
>
> [By pleasure we mean] the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not the enjoyments of boys and women, fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning. (Translation: Hicks 1972, slightly altered)

It is nevertheless interesting and important to note that Augustine does not seem to reject the way of life represented by the beggar in all respects, for although he hastens to agree that the beggar does not represent the ideal life (*verum gaudium*), he obviously was impressed by him and regarded him as being on the right track towards security and pleasure, which he himself – as he admits –

25 The quotation is borrowed from Simpson 1985, 44.
26 See Fuhrer 2000.

failed to achieve at that time (*Conf.* 6.6.9): *sed et ego illis ambitionibus multo falsius quaerebam. Et certe ille laetabatur, ego anxius eram, securus ille, ego trepidus* ("But yet I with those my ambitious designs, hunted after a much uncertainer [scil. joy]. And certainly that fellow was jocund, but I perplexed; he void of care, I full of fear"). Augustine seemed to be persuaded, at this stage in his life, that striving for pleasure and avoiding pain belonged to the innate drive of man, and he phrases this insight as follows (*Conf.* 8.3.7):

> Easque ipsas voluptates humanae vitae etiam non inopinatis et praeter voluntatem inruentibus, sed institutis et voluntariis molestiis homines adquirunt. Edendi et bibendi voluptas nulla est, nisi praecedat esuriendi et sitiendi molestia.
>
> These are the actual human pleasures of life that people strive for, not only derived from difficulties that are unexpected and unlooked for but also from those that have been anticipated and willingly accepted. There is no pleasure in eating and drinking unless they are preceded by the discomfort of hunger and thirst.

When Augustine expresses the thought that among the fundamental desires of human nature are peace, friendship and security, and even mentions an innate impulse to avoid pain[27] and to strive for pleasure by eating and drinking,[28] his assertion has an Epicurean ring to it and has been rightly compared to some passages in Lucretius or Cicero.[29] The thought is reminiscent of the Epicurean observation that, as soon as they are born, humans long for pleasure and try to avoid pain – the so-called "cradle argument."[30] Augustine seems to side with the Epicureans when he confirms that the basic desire of human nature is to avoid pain, to achieve pleasure and to gain security. At the moment when he regards the beggar as more advanced than himself and as leading a life superior to his own, he signals that certain aspects of Epicurean ethics, rightly understood, should be regarded in positive terms, since he admits that at that time he still wished to play a role in social life and was striving for recognition and glory, and therefore could not bring himself to say farewell to ambition and adopt the humble life-style of the beggar.

It would be only at a later stage in his development that Augustine started to relinquish secular ambition and the pursuit of honours, peace of mind and friendship. In any case, this brief autobiographical anecdote illustrates well that at a certain stage of his life Augustine did not disagree with everything the Epicureans stood for. He even goes so far as to confess that he almost became an

27 August. *Conf.* 1.20.31; cf. Simpson 1985, 42.
28 August. *Conf.* 10.31.43–47.
29 Cf. Simpson 1985, 40–41 n. 8.
30 Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 1.30; Erler/Schofield 1999, 650; Brunschwig 1986.

Epicurean and that only his conviction of the immortality of the soul, which Epicurus flatly denied, kept him from handing over the palm of victory to the founder of the Garden (*Conf.* 6.16.26):

> Et disputabam cum amicis meis Alypio et Nebridio de finibus bonorum et malorum Epicurum accepturum fuisse palmam in animo meo, nisi ego credidissem post mortem restare animae vitam et tractus meritorum, quod Epicurus credere noluit.
>
> I disputed in those days with my friends Alypius and Nebridius concerning the limits of good and evil: determining, that Epicurus in my judgement should have won the garland, had I not verily believed that there remained a life for the soul after the body was dead and the fruits of our deservings, which Epicurus would not believe.

In the same context, Augustine makes the confession that he had considered, albeit hypothetically, the possibility of combining both philosophical positions: Epicurus' hedonism and the Christian belief in the immortality of the soul. He poses the question (*Conf.* 6.16.26): *si essemus immortales et in perpetua corporis voluptate sine ullo amissionis terrore viveremus, cur non essemus beati aut quid aliud quaereremus* ("Suppose that we were to be immortal, and were to live in perpetual enjoyment of bodily pleasures, and that without fear of losing them, why should we not then be fully happy, and wherefore should we seek for any other thing?"). Augustine eventually came to the conclusion that, without belief in the immortality of the soul, there would be no fear of punishment for sinful people and no prospect of compensation after death for good behavior in life – a deficit that would make the life of pleasure impossible to sustain because it would entail worrying that a morally bad life would not be punished later on. He therefore became convinced that Epicurus' teachings could not be reconciled with the anxieties of daily life.[31]

According to Augustine, the Epicureans failed to help avoid the grief that is caused by the death of a loved one – a circumstance that, in his estimation, would crush one's pleasure. From the vantage-point of authentic Epicureans, however, this did not pose an insurmountable problem, since they believed that emotions like grief at the death of a friend were quite natural and therefore to be acknowledged.[32] Excessive grief, on the other hand, was to be avoided.[33] Consequently, they disagreed with those who would not accept emotions like the sorrow and grief caused by the death of friends. On the contrary, they argue that an absence of grief would stem from another, even greater evil, because this absence would

31 August. *Conf.* 6.16.26.
32 Cf. Lucr. 3.320f.; Heßler 2015.
33 Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.24.

render us totally insensible to the afflictions of life. In fact, "the memory of a dead friend" for Epicureans "is pleasurable on every account."[34] According to their view of human nature, emotions like grief do not diminish pleasure in life at all. Augustine, on the other hand, undoubtedly wished to belong to those who prefer to do away with grief altogether, so he felt impelled, as he says, to transcend the material world and to adopt more amenable views and theories. At this juncture in his quest, he turned to Platonism and Christianity.

In retrospect, Augustine later came to consider his openness to Epicurean teachings an error and, on many occasions, he rebuts them in no uncertain terms. It was only when he felt able to accept emotions like grief without falling into despair that he entertained the hope for a happy afterlife. It was thanks to his formal conversion to the Christian faith that he could even experience joy at the death of his beloved mother because of his certainty that she would rest in peace.[35] But this conceptual turn did not prevent him from preserving at least part of the Epicurean system of values. In this respect, a few ingredients of Epicurean teaching remain recognizable in his mature thought and work. Indeed, sometimes he includes Epicurean material in his own teaching in order to demonstrate that it could be reconciled, at some level, with certain aspects of Christian dogma. His purpose in doing so was to show that a few key Epicurean desiderata, like peace of mind and security, could only, in the end, be achieved by embracing Christian belief.[36] According to Augustine's theory of sensation, for instance, the conviction that the soul is watching over the organs of the body[37] may plausibly be regarded as an answer to Epicurean materialist epistemology. In addition to this, Augustine manifests a residual attraction to Epicurus' hedonism, although making personal mental and physical pleasure the standard of all decisions could, from a Christian point of view, lead to eternal damnation. The Christian theologian also agrees with the pagan Epicureans that friendship is of great importance in achieving happiness. The high value accorded to friendship among the Epicureans is a prominent theme in Augustine's main sources, most notably in the enthusiastic defence mounted by the figure of Torquatus in Cicero's *De finibus*.[38] Augustine, too, calls friendship "sweet to me above all sweetness of this life" (*suavis mihi super omnes suavitates illius vitae meae*, Watts 1968)"[39] and is drawn to the prospect of a life within a community of friends that is removed

34 Plut. *Non posse* 1105e, transl. Einarson/De Lacy 1967.
35 August. *Conf.* 9.13.37 along with Simpson 1985, 44.
36 August. *Conf.* 2.6.13; for the Epicurean concept of security, see Schofield 1999, 748–756.
37 August. *Ep.* 118.4.29.
38 Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 1.65.
39 August. *Conf.* 4.4.7, transl. Watts 1968.

from the affairs of the world. He himself tried to establish a community of friends, as he mentions in his discussion with Alypius (*Conf.* 6.14.24):

> Et multi amici agitaveramus animo et conloquentes ac detestantes turbulentas humanae vitae molestias paene iam firmaveramus remoti a turbis otiose vivere, id otium sic moliti, ut, si quid habere possemus, conferremus in medium unamque rem familiarem conflaremus ex omnibus, ut per amicitiae sinceritatem non esset aliud huius et aliud illius.
>
> And we were many friends, who debated together, conferring about detesting these turbulent molestations of human life; and we had now almost resolved to sequester ourselves from company, and to live at peace; we hoped so to obtain that peace, by putting together that stock every man was able to make, and making one household of all; that through the plain dealing of a common friendship, one thing should not be this man's, and another that man's. (Translation: Watts 1968)

This utopian plan failed to materialize, however, because his friends had doubts about how their wives would react. Historically, the original Epicureans did not encounter this particular problem, since they readily accepted women into the community of the Garden. At the beginning of the third book of the *Confessiones*, Augustine also expresses agreement with what Epicurus had to say about the problems created by sexual desire and the turmoil caused by youthful sensuality along the lines described by Lucretius in the diatribe against love.[40] Despite these reservations, Augustine apparently did not heed Epicurean advice regarding sexual intercourse for a long time in his life.[41] That is shown by his struggle with the attractions of the flesh, which he cannot overcome but with the help of God.[42]

Other aspects of Epicurean teaching may help to clarify what Augustine has to say about the role of justice and of contracts in the earthly city (*terrena civitas*). In *De civitate Dei*, Augustine discusses the issues of community, laws, justice and peace and their interrelations. He disagrees with Plato, Aristotle and Cicero in so far as he does not grant a fundamental role to justice in the ideal polity. He adduces the example of the Roman Empire, whose citizens, according to him, are characterized as utilitarian in their striving for wealth, military success and peace, with peace being understood in this case as freedom from all external threats. Augustine claims that Rome was never a republic because true justice never existed in it.[43] He is convinced that justice, although desirable, cannot be found in any worldly state including the Roman Empire, owing to the fact that, in the normative social fabric, love of oneself prevails over the love of God. Such communi-

40 August. *Conf.* 3.1.1; Lucr. 6.1037–1208.
41 August. *Sol.* 1.25.
42 August. *Conf.* 10.41.
43 August. *De civ. D.* 2.21.4.

ties, in his view, are based on "common interests" (*communiones utilitatis*) rather than on principles of justice. He therefore disagrees with Cicero, who had defined the Republic as a group of humans with common interests which acknowledges right,[44] and he alters this definition by retaining the notion of common interest (*utilitatis communione sociatus*) while omitting the reference to right or justice (*iuris consensus*).[45] In Augustinian thought, then, it is not justice but common agreement of the citizens in respect to the objects of their love that keeps members of the community together without regard for the moral quality of those objects.[46] In coming to the conclusion that no profound difference exists between human societies and robber gangs (as Carneades had argued previously),[47] Augustine appears to hold the opinion that mundane human society is founded on social contracts rather than on moral concepts – a view that is partially in accord with the utilitarian account of the origin of laws which we find in the work of Epicurus' Roman disciple, Lucretius (see 3.1143–1150).

It is a truism that Augustine is not the first thinker in antiquity to make the case for the social contract. In this regard, consider especially the sophists,[48] whose position is well defended by the interlocutor Glaucon in the second book of Plato's *Respublica*, where he virtually summarizes the chief assumptions of the sophist's contractual theories.[49] These theories are based on a rather harsh and unflattering concept of the nature of men, who regard it as most desirable to have maximum power to inflict hurt on others while incurring minimal risk of being injured in turn. When Augustine deals with this topic, he mentions not only the sophists but also Epicurus, for he, too, defends a version of the contract theory and denies that justice is that upon which human society is fundamentally based. There remains, however, an important difference between Epicurus' position and that of the sophists – a difference that is especially relevant to a fuller understanding of the Augustinian position on this matter. Augustine arguably comes quite close to defending an Epicurean, rather than a sophistic, conception of an original social contract, for, according to the latter school of thought, man's behavior is characterised by a certain aggressiveness and an innate desire to exercise power over others. From this jaundiced perspective human nature is typified by πλεονεξία, i.e. the constant desire for more, regarded as a natural good.[50] Such

44 Cic. *Resp.* 1.39; 2.70; August. *De civ. D.* 19.21.
45 August. *De civ. D.* 2.21.2; 19.21; see Weithma 2001.
46 August. *De civ. D.* 19.24; see Fortin 1997; Weithman 2001, 235–236.
47 August. *De civ. D.* 4.4.
48 Cf. Kahn 1981.
49 Pl. *Resp.* 358e–360e; for the comparison with Epicurus, see Mitsis 1988, 82.
50 Pl. *Resp.* 359c.

an underlying attitude is problematic in terms of harmonious human interaction, since it inevitably leads to conflicts among individuals. It is only because of this intrinsic danger to mutual security that sophists like Glaucon devise a utilitarian theory of social contracts. By their very nature, such contracts are based on a kind of negotiated compromise, whereby persons agree to give away some of their power in order to gain some security in exchange. In Glaucon's account, contracts were invented by the majority of the weak in order to prevail over the minority of the strong, which is a position that has often been compared to the theory of social contract that Augustine sustains in *De civitate Dei*.

Whereas Augustine would agree that a contract between men to prevent mutual harm is of great importance in human society – even more so than justice – and that this communal agreement is constitutive of social life, he would disagree that a principle of subjection should be essential to the basis of any society. Rather, he emphatically repudiates the idea that aggressiveness and the desire for power are part and parcel of human nature and that conflicts originate among men for that inherent reason.[51]

In his worldview, everyone strives for peace as the ultimate good and, since he holds this to be true not only for Christians who long for eternal life and peace, but also for pagans, he believes that this desire is the basic principle underlying communal agreements. He observes that wars are waged as a means to arrive finally at peace and that conspirators maintain a kind of peace among themselves in order to achieve their ends. Even robbers, he points out, will keep peace with their comrades in order to be able to attack their victims successfully. Augustine goes so far as to claim that monstrous figures like Cacus, whom Vergil describes as a non-social cave dweller and a savage creature, will in the end desire peace because every sentient being preserves "traces" (*vestigia*) of this natural desire.[52] Accordingly, he maintains that contracts or communal agreements are to be regarded not as the result of forced compromises, but rather as a means to achieving the ultimate aim of all human desire, which is peace – a conclusion that rebuts the false assumption, as presupposed most notably by Glaucon and the sophists, that humans are aggressive by nature. A longing for peace therefore constitutes a *Leitmotif* in the argument of *De civitate Dei*.

It is this view of human character that marks the disparity between the Epicurean position and that of the sophists, for the Epicureans did not believe in an aggressiveness innate to human beings or in their natural desire to harm others, but rather that they resorted to violence only when obliged to secure their own

51 Cf. Erler 2009a.

52 Verg. *A*. 8.190–275; August. *De civ. D*. 19.12.2.

protection. Lucretius indeed argues that, even in the earliest stage of human development, men do not naturally desire to harm others. Later, in fact, they are only "too happy" (*aventes*) to form communal agreements, because they neither wish to harm others nor to suffer harm themselves.[53] The Epicurean wise man, therefore, cultivates desires that satisfy one's natural psychological needs, which, according to the doctrine, do not include human aggression. Consequently, he seeks to satisfy natural desires, which mainly lie in acquiring peace of mind.

The Epicureans therefore did not regard social contracts as compromises or as second-best solutions, but as welcome instruments designed to provide personal security and peace of mind.[54] Such contracts are based on mutual interests and do not force the parties into accepting agreements deemed untoward. This position differs strongly from what sophists like Glaucon professed, but it comes close to Augustine's preconception, for he also does not assume that mankind is aggressive by nature; rather, he sides with the Epicureans in believing that humans always strive naturally for security and peace. Epicurus concedes that the natural desire for peace and "peace of mind" (ἀταραξία) might be misguided sometimes but claims that it is never relinquished.

Interestingly, Augustine signals to the reader that his own understanding of human nature and communal agreements has an Epicurean ring to it, for in *Civitas Dei* he employs the phrase *naturae extrema vestigia*[55] to describe the way in which the human desire for peace is rooted in human nature. The phrase carries an allusion to a passage in Vergil's *Georgica*,[56] where a life of tranquillity is praised, and the reader is reminded of the Epicurean background of this praise because Vergil himself had borrowed the expression from Lucretius, who uses almost the same words when talking about the nature of the human soul.[57] By this indirect means, Augustine points to the tradition that stands behind his view of human character and of a society that is not based on justice but on communal agreement. In my judgment, Augustine once again makes use of elements of Epicurean precepts in order to clarify his own position. This is not to deny that the philosophical outlook of the Epicureans and that of Augustine were worlds apart, as regards fundamental tenets like materialism, deism or mortality of the soul. Nevertheless, it proves to be worthwhile to reckon with the influence of Epicureanism on Augustinian thought, as far as aspects of practical ethics and common life are concerned. In this respect, it is striking that certain positions that were

53 Cf. Lucr. 5.925–1457, esp. 1011–1027; Mitsis 1988, 84.
54 KD 40; cf. Mitsis 1988, 87.
55 August. *De civ. D.* 19.12.2.
56 Verg. *G*. 2.458–474, esp. 473–474.
57 Cf. Lucr. 3.308. and 3.20.

defended by Augustine along with some Platonists[58] are strongly reminiscent of fundamental Epicurean tenets.

As noted above, Augustine kept open the door for accepting certain aspects of Epicurean practical ethics. In doing so, he paved the way for the close affinity between Epicureanism and Christian beliefs that can be observed in the writings of Renaissance and early modern philosophers. Thus, when Augustine's thought experiment that aimed at combining Epicurean pleasure and Christian belief in the immortality of the soul was eventually rejected by him, it was subsequently defended by the eminent Renaissance humanist Lorenzo Valla and ultimately came to be regarded as corroborating a positive view of the natural world.

58 Cf. Erler 2009b, 59–63.

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